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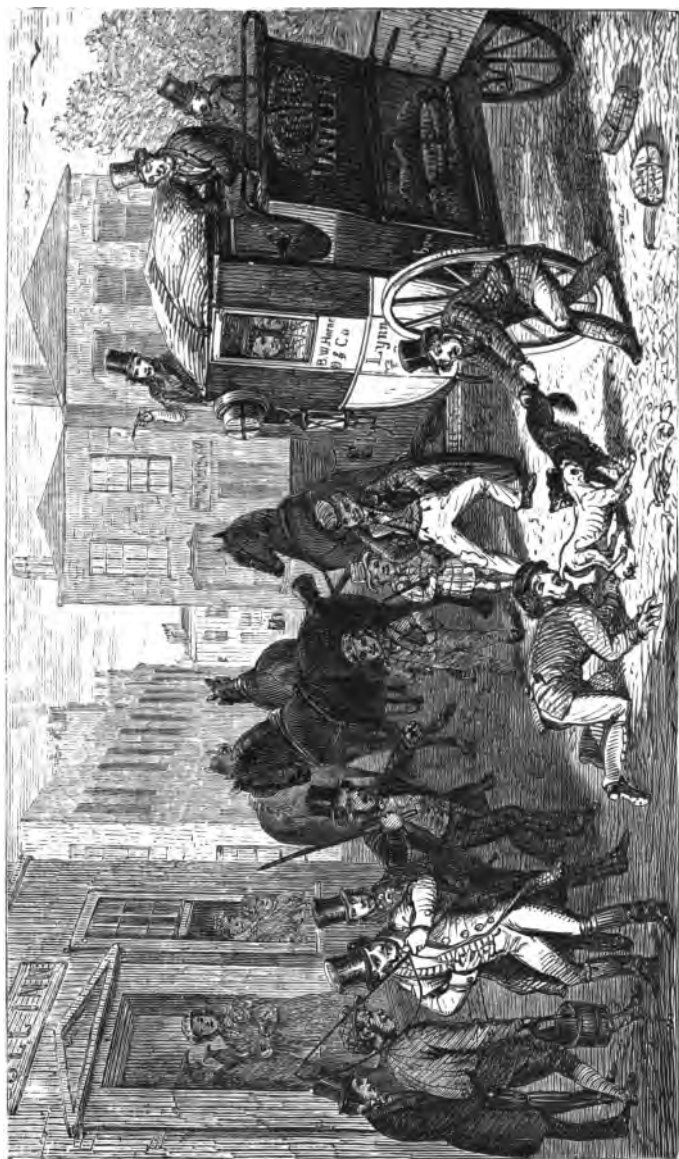


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THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A
STAGE-COACHMAN.



A DOG FIGHT.

Vol. III., p. 212.

THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A
STAGE - COACHMAN.

BY
THOMAS CROSS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. III.

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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A STAGE-COACHMAN.

CHAPTER I.

CAMBRIDGE.

The First Journey Up—An Untoward Circumstance—A Reassurance—Discourse on the Box—Figurative Comparison—A Timely Rebuff—Merchant and Banker—The Journey Down—An Hotel and Banquet—An Episode—Lodgings—An Agreeable Reception—Strange Object—Its Appearance Described—Anecdotes and Reflections—An Intellectual Company—Shrimp Van—Juveniles—Poor Tribute—Sporting Parson—Splendour Defaced—Immortality Rivalled—Senatorial Figures Compared—Adam a Gardener—Contemplation.

To pursue the course of my narrative,
which is not quite so straight as the turn-

pike road upon which I was now driving, I must state that my first journey to London was attended with rather an inauspicious event. I did not know a yard of the road the first two stages before the day I took possession of the box of the Lynn coach; but had no difficulty in finding my way, as, with the exception of diverging from the Royston road, rather more than four miles from Cambridge, I could not possibly make a mistake; and in taking the right road, the horses themselves I knew would be a sufficient guide. Arrived at the Inn which my predecessor had used, I pulled up, and he informed me that he should resume his seat in a day or two, but gave no reason for his strange conduct, and for his not saying anything to his employers. This, of course, did not tend to put me on very good terms with myself.

After changing for the last time at Waltham Cross, and it coming on dark, I forgot, if I had ever known, the double

gate at Kingsland, and the glare of the lamps not permitting me to see that the further one was closed, my leaders ran against it, and the force of the concussion knocked them on their haunches, and very much discomposed my nerves. The confusion was very great—one of the bars being broken, and the leaders partly under the wheel horses. I got down, and there being plenty of assistance, soon liberated the team, replaced the broken bar with a spare one we always carried, and being pretty well up in knotting and splicing, made the reins right. No further mischief having been done, I proceeded on the journey; but had the greatest difficulty in piloting the team—one of which, a wheel horse, I recognised as the animal I had cured of his evil propensities at Oxford by my knowledge of hydropathics—through the city—one pulling, another rearing, and all from their excited state being nearly unmanageable. However, at last, much to my relief, I landed

them safe in the "Golden Cross" yard; and to those who recollect that yard before it was purchased by Government and pulled down, this will appear to have been no very easy task.

Before I got off the box, the proprietor, speaking to me from the office door, cried, "Oh, you are there, sir, are you?"

My friend the wine merchant was with him; and, as I supposed, had made him acquainted with the whole affair. I replied in the affirmative, and added that the other man would return in a day or two.

"Indeed!" he exclaimed. "It is my desire that you retain your seat, and let no one put you off. He has left without acquainting me, and he does not return."

"Very well, sir," said I, pleased at being thus reassured.

"When you have settled your bill, come into the coffee-room."

An invitation I was very glad to accept.

In the meantime a gentleman, who.

with his two daughters occupied the inside, and who I thought would take exception at the very awkward display I had made at Kingsland (where he sat very quiet, merely asking what was the matter), on paying me more than double the usual fee, much to my surprise complimented me on the nerve and presence of mind I possessed, and, wishing me good-night, walked with his companions towards the hackney coach the porter had called for him.

It was with much pleasure I afterwards renewed my acquaintance with this gentleman, who up to the time of his death was one of my most frequent as well as my most liberal patrons. He invariably, winter and summer, took an inside place; but if the weather were at all fine he would ask to sit beside me, and I always felt happy to have for my companion on the box a person who would converse with me, and therefore took some little

trouble to preserve the seat for him. His manner to me at all times was affable and kind in the extreme, and I could venture an opinion on any subject without fear of giving offence—although I remember at one time, in the early part of our acquaintance, nearly exceeding the bounds of discretion.

The County in which I was born, including the Isle of Wight, contained before the Reform Bill more close, rotten, and nomination boroughs than any other county of its size—Southampton being the only one that could positively be declared open or free from aristocratic influence. Petersfield was a nomination, Portsmouth a close borough—the former the property of Colonel Joliffe, the latter, in the important matter of sending members to parliament—it was generally supposed—was nearly as much under the dictation of a very wealthy

old gentleman,* residing in the former place, as Cambridge, where I then resided, was under the Duke of Rutland.

Conversing one day with this gentleman on the representation of Lynn—for which place Lord William Bentinck, afterwards Governor-general of India, was then Member—I ventured to hint that Lynn, or the Lynn Corporation, of which my companion was the most distinguished member, bore the same relationship to the Duke of Portland as Portsmouth did to the Petersfield Esquire, who always walked with a large cane, and came down at the time of an election for Members of Parliament, flourishing it over their heads, daring the Corporation to speak, or even think, of any other candidates than those he should name to them.

Of course my companion took this as it

* The late John Bonham, Esq.

was meant—figuratively—but indignantly denied the inference. He took pains to instruct me as to the nature and component parts of the constituency of Lynn Regis, and gave good reasons for their selection of men of considerable influence with the Government and in Parliament, for their representatives; among which might be reckoned the drainage of the Fens, and the improvement of the navigation and the port of Lynn. When I was informed of the number of Acts relative to those important objects that had been, and would be yet, in the House, I could but acknowledge my fallacious and ill-drawn conclusions, and contrasted them with his sound judgment and superior understanding.

Indeed, he was an excellent specimen of that most respectable class, the merchants and bankers of the country. He was a man of great penetration and quick discernment—his intercourse with

the world, joined to faculties of no mean order, gave him an intimate knowledge of his kind—he was therefore admirably qualified for the office of chief magistrate of so important a town, or to preside over a deliberative body, and to guide those with whom he acted in all matters concerning the wants and welfare of the community among whom he resided. His name will ever be remembered and spoken of with gratitude and esteem by all who knew him, and by none more sincerely than by the author, who takes this opportunity of paying a slight tribute of respect to his memory.*

I repaired to the coffee-room, where, over a little brandy and water, I again received the sanction of the governor of the establishment, who, having heard the forcible reasoning of my friend, the wine merchant, expressed himself anxious to make

* The late John Blencowe, Esq.

amends for the long neglect I had experienced, though as he said he feared I should not find it a very lucrative appointment.

I began my first journey down, and performed it without meeting with any incident worth recording. The weather was exceedingly mild; for though it was the month of March, it was more like May or June, and all the windows were up as I drove down the principal street to the "Bull." This season, I must also observe, was the earliest ever remembered, and there had not been the slightest frost during the past winter. The corn was ready for the sickle before the end of June, and completely harvested before July was out.

On my pulling up, who should I see on the pavement clutching his stick, but my friend Monops, who, it turned out, had driven the Fakenham coach down the night before. On my getting off the box he accosted me with—

"Well, young man, I have ordered dinner for you at my lodgings, boiled fowl and bacon."

"Very kind of you," I replied. Being a perfect stranger in the place, I resolved to accept his invitation; therefore, after answering a few interrogatives made in the kindest manner by my friend of yesterday, and finding that the coach had started for its ultimate destination with a paucity of passengers, I accompanied him.

Never having been at Cambridge, my thoughts reverted to the Sister University, and I already began in my mind to draw comparisons between them; but I looked around in vain for the beautiful High Street of the latter. And my companion would not allow me long to indulge in any such ruminations, but took me at once, after passing two or three narrow, dirty streets, to a house of a very mean appearance at no great distance. I did certainly venture to ask the name of the hotel, where

we were to discuss the promised meal, while looking round to discover something like one; but all I had in reply was, "Never mind, young man, come along with me." Entering the house, and ascending from the ground floor, which seemed occupied by a noisy and not very sweet-smelling community, we found a room fronting the street, rather bare of furniture, but very clean, having a table very neatly spread, and disclosing nothing objectionable to a man intent on—chiefly and primarily — satisfying his appetite. The dinner was served, and there was no necessity for asking me if it were to my taste.

We were waited on by a tall matronly-looking woman, about the age of forty. The remains of beauty, faded like her dress, hung about her, and there was a taciturnity in her manner very uncommon in females who occupy the position of either mistress or maid

in places of public resort. I observed that my companion spoke to her in very familiar terms, though they were by no means improper; and I also remarked that she always answered him with a monosyllable. There was something about the female that interested me, and when removing the cloth her staid and studied manner awakened my curiosity.

This was not unobserved by my companion.

"Don't you know her, young man?" he inquired.

"No," I replied, "how should I? But you do. Who is she?"

"Jack Hale's wife," he said, naming a well-known Oxford dragsman.

"Nonsense," I exclaimed; "I was at his house in London not long ago, and when I drove the 'Crown Prince,' we had some talk about exchanging. I then saw his wife, a very different person from this—indeed, quite the opposite."

Now, this man had attained as great a notoriety, as a professional, as my friend Monops, as much for being a first-rate workman as for a dashing devil-me-care sort of bearing, that caused him to be a great favourite on the road, indeed quite a pet with the amateurs, and an idol with the undergraduates.

Jack was a smart looking fellow when young, and, by means that it would be in vain for me to attempt to describe, had made sad inroads in the affections of the females who officiated at the houses where he daily took his refreshment; and it was one of these, it proved afterwards, I had taken for Mrs. H.—indeed she really was so, although the one I had been introduced to by Monops had a prior claim on the hand and heart of this Lothario.

A day or two afterwards, on my following journey down, I was induced from curiosity to ask the lady if what I had heard from our friend was true. She replied in

the affirmative; and, upon further inquiry, I found that, being the daughter of respectable parents, she had been sent to a boarding-school, where the sight of that fascinating object, a stage-coach, had more charms for her than the usual routine of female study; and, from the weakness of her heart or understanding, the nod and smile of its conductor soon supplanted the tuition of either the drawing or music master. After a few stolen interviews with this member of so engaging a profession, in an unhappy hour she consented to an elopement, and was married to him.

It was not long before she had good reasons for repenting the steps she had taken; and while lamenting and telling me the many evil consequences of her error, arising principally from his ill-treatment, she went into an adjoining room and dragged from the place of its concealment a large portmanteau. She informed me that

it was once full of the most valuable articles, adding :—

“I have at this moment the life of my husband in my hands, for he purloined this from the coach he once drove, and disposed of its contents.”

I did not stop to enquire whether she partook of the benefits arising from such a criminal act, but failed not to discover, as she gave me her history, intermingled as it was with tears, that her hatred of the vile means by which he supported his extravagance and otherwise profligate conduct caused her to separate from him, and to seek to obtain her own living.

Although I listened to her story with painful attention, and commiserated the poor woman's unhappy and as it seemed irreparable condition, my greater annoyance arose from my lot being cast with a fraternity where such men as the one she had been speaking of and Monops were looked upon as its principal ornaments.

I resolved, therefore, to shake off my acquaintance with them; in furtherance of which I took private lodgings, though I had some little difficulty in procuring apartments that I liked, as, contrary to the custom at Oxford, the undergraduates were, and are still, allowed to reside without the walls of their different colleges; and the benefits arising to the lodging-house keepers from the self-allotted perquisites, which might truly be called black-mail, levied on their thoughtless and unsuspecting inmates, caused them to look with disfavour on any strange applicant not being a member of the University.

However, by dint of perseverance, I succeeded in establishing myself in one of the narrow though principal streets, leading from the Market Hill—as a small open space—in front of a mean and dingy-looking building which served for a Town-hall—was called.

Here in the morning I performed my toilet for the day, and was walking delibe-

rately along, when, about twenty or thirty yards from my own door, splash came a whole basin of water, something like breakfast slops, in my face, running down my neck, completely saturating my cravat, and otherwise moistening and discolouring my shirt and waistcoat. Remonstrance was vain, and only elicited an apology from the Hebe, who, with a slattern's gait and uncombed locks, had been the authoress of my discomfiture. She alleged, as an excuse, that having no back premises, people were compelled, like the inhabitants of the sweet-savoured Northern capital, to throw everything into the street.

Returning to my lodgings to change and re-adjust my dress, I issued forth again, not much prepossessed in favour of a place where I had just received so unpleasant a mark of distinction, when I saw a posse of people—some men, some boys, and a few women—congregated round a figure of a grotesque and extraordinary appearance, who stood

in front of a butcher's shop, gesticulating and loudly haranguing, as I thought, the motley group.

I stopped for a minute to scan this eccentric personage, who it seemed was a familiar object to all but myself. I wondered why the authorities did not prevent the collecting of such an assemblage in the streets, particularly as it comprised many gownsmen, young and old. I, however, supposed that it must be an exhibition peculiar to this University.

The man had on a blue dress-coat with gilt buttons, which were not altogether disposed in regular order, nor was the garment itself free from those gaps which time and use had created. The colour of his waistcoat, from the accumulation of snuff and other impurities, it would have been a difficult matter to define. Nothing in the shape of linen was visible about his person; his head was surmounted by a large cocked hat, which he wore

athwart ships, as the sailors term it, with a cockade and a gold loop in front; while his nether extremities—his limbs being partly enveloped in tattered inexpressibles—disdaining any covering—corresponded in their hue with his unwashed and half-shaven visage. Round his neck he wore what was intended to represent a massive gold chain, to which was appended an eyeglass, which “ever and anon” he would apply to his organ of vision, although it was evident enough it did not need that assistance, for he had a fine full eye, which might have lit up large and intelligent features, had the organ not been dimmed by perpetual sotting. In his hand he carried an immense stick, or bludgeon, with which he every now and then threatened those who interrupted his discourse, or otherwise offended him by laughter or mockery.

On my passing him—for in my way to the coach I could not avoid so doing—he cried out, in a stentorian voice,

"Who are you, Sir?" To this I did not deign an answer, when he loudly added, "What are you, Sir?"

To this question I should have been puzzled to give an answer to a more polite inquirer; but judging from the man's appearance that he must be a maniac, and knowing from experience that it was better to please than to tease—either a fool or a madman, I deliberately took off my hat, and bowing, said—

"*That* can be of no importance to so great a man."

Upon this the crowd set up a loud laugh, which I was willing to accept as a sort of recognition of my ignorance of the man's character, when he, turning round, with a knowing shake of his head to them, observed—

"He knows how to behave to his superiors, you see."

I have since heard many facetious

anecdotes of this compound of the lowest of vices with the highest attainments—(for he had been known to expound the most difficult passages in Tacitus, and other ancient writers, when appealed to by the students)—but as his doings have been referred to and his character drawn—rather in caricature—by the author of “Pelham,” perhaps two will suffice.

One day, when in a little better trim than that in which I saw him—that is, before his irreclaimable conduct had brought him quite so low—he met the Master of Trinity, Bishop Mansel, whose Son had just then made his escape from a French prison, and begged half-a-crown of his lordship to drink his Son's health. The Bishop remonstrated with him, not more hardly, perhaps, than he deserved, and told him to go about his business, and when he found a greater scoundrel than himself to bring him to him (the Master), and he would grant his request.

Very soon after he met with one of the Esquire Beadles, whom he knew was not in the Master's good books, and told him the Bishop, who held the office of Vice-Chancellor at the time, wished to speak to him immediately. Accordingly, the latter proceeded to the Lodge, his informant following at his heels. The door was opened, and, on his name being announced, the Bishop came out, and requested to know his business.

"You sent for me, my lord."

"I! Indeed I did not," said his lordship. "Pray, who has told you I wanted you?"

"This man," was the reply.

The trick of the arch-vagrant instantly occurred to him, and, after politely bowing his visitor out, on his companion advancing the Bishop smilingly presented him with a crown, for his ingenuity.

On another occasion, one of a family high in favour with the Duke of Rut-

land had been chosen Mayor* for his grace's borough of Cambridge. He was a good-tempered, easy, facetious gentleman, of whom no one ever said an evil word.

On his return from the Vice-Chancellor's Lodge, where he had been, as was customary, with his retinue of Aldermen, Burgesses, and Mace-bearers, to receive the sanction of his high authority, our hero, seeing him distinguished by his scarlet gown and other insignia of office, ran after him, and, jumping on his back, caused him to carry him two or three yards, when he, as quickly getting off, called out to the astonished crowd—

“Who can say I never rode a Mayor?”

This poor creature was at once the scoffed and the scoffer—the scorned and the scorner; his attainments were the envy of the scholar—his gross misconduct the

* The late William Mortlock, Esq.

pity of the charitable and right-thinking—his personal appearance and manner the constant jest of the learned as well as the unlearned.*

Such scenes as these did not much recommend the place to my favour; neither did the society I met in the evenings, by the advice of my predecessor, accord with my taste. Having entered a room called the Sixteen, which from its darkness—there being but one mutton-light placed on a table in the centre—reminding me of the poet's description of Hecate's cave, I expected from his account to be entertained with some scientific exposition, or, at least, some learned and interesting conversation. I was greatly disappointed when I found myself sitting down next two well-dressed men, who, by earnestly disputing which was the most

* This unfortunate being, well known as "Tommy Gordon," has long been defunct; but lives in the memory of every Cantab. of his time.

desirable part of the visage to commence operations on, convinced me that they were journeymen barbers. The rest of the company were doubting or affirming the truth of some doggerel rhymes published in their provincial paper, which gave a ludicrous description of some persons who had been dupes of a hoax—announcing that a man would walk on the water from Lynn to Cambridge,* many of whom were then in the room. Such things did not give me a favourable opinion of the intellectual acquirements of a community among whom I had a very good chance of taking up my abode for some considerable time.

Nevertheless, I continued on the box, and did not, as I had expected, meet with any hindrance or interference from my predecessor. I could not boast of my coach being overloaded, except with packages of those little crustaceans so

* One Zachariah Whitmore; a trick of some wag in the University.

much in favour with the Londoners, and commonly called Lynn shrimps; while the down coach, hung round with empty baskets on a sultry day, would emit an effluvium that was very uninviting to the gentry, who in consequence would rather choose some circuitous route than thus have their olfactory organs offended.

Still, it sometimes happened that I was accompanied by some of the more youthful members of the upper ten thousand. One morning in particular, I remember, three of them, who in the exuberance of their spirits, on leaving the Charterhouse, treated me with a portion of them, double-distilled. Their good looks, good tempers, and, with this exception, good manners, would not allow me to be angry, although the liquid accidentally fell on the skirts of a coat I had donned for the first time that morning; and the circumstance would have fled my memory had it not been the

first of my acquaintance with one of the three, since grown to eminence and distinction in his neighbourhood, from whom the author has received many proofs of a kind and generous patronage, more than common marks of attention on particular occasions, and, what was more prized than all, a heartfelt sympathy in domestic calamity.* These things are not to be forgotten; neither is the manly bearing and liberal and Christian spirit of one of his companions, who was snatched in the prime of life from a circle of affectionate relatives and admiring friends—a gentleman who never ceased to manifest towards the author the most gratifying marks of his approbation and esteem.

Among my earliest clients was a gentleman, whom I afterwards found to be a beneficed clergyman, holding a very valu-

* Richard Bagge, Esq., of Gaywood Hall.

able living in the neighbourhood of Downham, in Norfolk. On my first having the pleasure of his company on the box, which he always, it appeared, took care to secure, and when we were both total strangers to each other, he did not speak or make any observation in passing through the streets till just at the turn from St. Paul's churchyard into Cheapside, something occurred in the conflux of vehicles that called up the exercise of all my skill as an artist to avoid an imminent collision. The quickness and precision I displayed elicited his unqualified approbation.

"Well done!" he cried. "You are a perfect master of your art, Sir, I can see. Where did you first learn to drive?"

Having briefly answered him, he forthwith commenced a dialogue which continued almost without intermission the whole of the journey, in which he de-

veloped an intimate knowledge of the horse. He described the various purposes to which he was adapted, whether for draught or saddle, together with the proper treatment of that noble and useful animal, to whatever purpose he might be applied. The dog, too, came in for a share of our colloquy, and my new friend evinced as much knowledge of the kennel as he had done of the stable, distinctly pointing out the qualities of the various breeds, more particularly adverting to the difference between a pointer and a setter, and the sort of country and shooting to which each was best adapted.

He was a man then advancing in years, but still of a hale constitution; of a compact frame, strong and active; of a pleasing countenance, and seemed formed by nature for anything but a sedentary life. His benevolent aspect, despite the vivid flash of his bright

sparkling eye, would have caused any one to differ from those who affirm that the love of field sports is incompatible with the exercise of the clerical office, or who think that the pursuit of a sportsman interferes with the duty of a minister.

Indeed, I had reason to surmise, a year or two after, when we had become further acquainted, that the two might be very well associated; that the same keenness of gaze that could descry a partridge or a hare at a distance, could seek an object on which to leave impressions not easily eradicated.

This I witnessed one morning over our breakfast where the coach stopped, when in company with my Son, then a lad about seventeen or eighteen years of age; for, after asking him two or three questions, he delivered a discourse on the proper fulfilment of filial obligations, with all that decision and earnest-

ness of manner which is so necessary in the field, combined with that dignity of sentiment and strong natural eloquence so essential in the pulpit.

In addition to this, though his tastes were decidedly of a nature not in accordance with the spirit of the present day, he was a gentleman of sound erudition, of kind feelings, and urbane manners, and possessed a fund of useful and amusing knowledge, so that his conversation was not always confined to the animating subject of field-sports. In our frequent and, to me, very pleasing intercourse, he had always some fresh anecdote to relate; and occasionally amused me with a happy solution of an enigma—a kind of ingenious trifling then much in fashion.

On one occasion, I remember, he asked me if I knew what two words in the English language (and there were but

two) contained all the vowels consecutively, as they appear in the alphabet. I replied in the negative, and ventured, as an excuse for my ignorance, to say that it would require a regular and continuous perusal of the dictionary to discover the words, and for that I had not sufficient application.

"Well," he said, "I do not agree with you. Do we not take refreshment at the next change?"

On my answering in the affirmative, he added—

"Then if you and I dine together *abstemiously*, and talk a little *facetiously* over our wine, I think we shall be able to make it out."

This, and similar peculiarities both in reading and arithmetic, the reverend gentleman made me acquainted with; and I very much regretted the loss of his company when he exchanged his

living for another in Somersetshire. My leisure hours I spent partly in inspecting the far-famed buildings of this celebrated University, and partly in pursuing my love of literature, or in courting the Muses. I of course shall not give a description of the beautiful colleges and temples founded by our pious ancestors, and erected for the advancement of religion, the diffusion of knowledge, the cultivation of science, and the education of the nobility and gentry of the land. At these I wondered and admired, but turned with disgust from the mean appearance of the houses, some of which were attached to the churches and chapels, and from the unseemly approaches by which the exterior of these venerable buildings were hid from the public view. Indeed it would seem to a close observer that succeeding generations had endeavoured to stop the progress which the arts—architecture in

particular—had made in the middle ages, and to deface those beautiful specimens by barbarous encroachments.

In that chapel, which is supposed to stand unrivalled in Europe for the unity of its design and its internal decoration, one or two of the windows that have obtained universal admiration for their splendid colours, as well as for their beautiful illustrations of sacred history from the Old and New Testaments, had long been obscured by a wall, and a side of the building desecrated by offices of the lowest description.

But all these disfigurements, thanks to the spirit of improvement, have been removed, the window restored, and a magnificent screen substituted for the wretched hovels that formed one side of the principal thoroughfare, in a Town that, void of form or uniformity, seemed to be made up of narrow streets and number-

less filthy courts and alleys. A splendid hall and library, new lodges and buildings, have been erected, more conducive to the comforts of the inmates, and more in accordance with the original intention of this regal endowment.

The noble quadrangle of Trinity, with its spacious hall, hung round with portraits of men eminent for the services they have rendered science or religion ; its library, replete with ancient manuscripts, and the works of antique and modern writers ; its chapel, famous for a work that has rendered the chisel of the sculptor almost as immortal as his subject—the great Sir Isaac Newton—by turns attracted my attention and engaged my time. Neither did I overlook a similar, though not equal, production in the Senate house ; and, in “looking upon this picture and upon that,” I could not fail to compare the talents

and services of the pilot that weathered the storm—with the possessor of the numerous titles that are engraved on the pedestal that stood beside him; while the outrageous representations of the two first Sovereigns of the House of Hanover reminded me more of their reputed though remote and savage ancestor, Ariovistus, than they did of their talents, their virtues, or their humanity.

The mulberry-tree planted by the hand of the divine Milton in Christ's College garden, and preserved in its old age from the destroying hand of time by the care of the less learned but as useful members of this pious institution—who followed the occupation of our common progenitor—did not escape my observation.

But the frequent contemplation of these objects caused me to lament, and sometimes to forget, my position, and

would drive me to my solitary room, to deliver myself up to the contemplation of a melancholy retrospect, as miserable as it was useless.

CHAPTER II.

ELY.

Congratulations—False Prophets—Reaction—A Man of Two Callings—A Woman of One—The Contrast—Bad Business—Strange Interview—Diplomacy—Fen Farmers—An Awful Visitation—An Honest Man—Strange Predicament—Advice—Matrimony—The Clergy—A Good Bishop—Society—A Leading Feature—The Effects of Ignorance : its Principal Cause—Exceptions—A Real Reformer—William Cobbett—A City Hotel—Magnificent Dinner—A New Acquaintance.

I HAD not long been confirmed in my seat before I received the congratulations of many of the fraternity, some of the most flattering nature, and all rife with prognostications of the vast benefits that would accrue to me from so fortunate

an appointment—though the different paths that were to lead to them were ludicrously remarkable. One—my friend of the “Bedford Pilot”—said, in his simplicity, that from what he knew of me he was sure I should have the support of all the University. Another, who drove the “Norwich Telegraph” from Newmarket, assured me that I was the very man to go in among the young ’uns, and monopolize all the betting. A third, from Oxford, asked what time I passed through Ware in the evening; and on my telling him about five, said, “You’re all right”—meaning that the retail trade would generally be abundant; while old Quaker Will, as he was called, who drove the “Cambridge Telegraph,” drily averred, as a fact, that when my Father’s predecessor in the London establishment first started the Lynn coach, he took a man out of Newgate (the debtors’ side) to drive it, and before he had been on

it six months he asked the Cambridge proprietor if he had any objection to go halves with him in a pipe of port wine, as a whole pipe was more than he well knew what to do with—leaving me to draw the inference.

From all this I was to gather that my situation would be a lucrative one; but the result soon falsified all their pleasing predictions. In the first place, my drag was not known as a Cambridge coach—or if known, known only to be avoided, for reasons I have before stated; therefore, if a gownsman did travel with us it was by accident or necessity, not from choice. And, again, it was apparent that here, as at Oxford, the lowest description of professionals was most in favour with under-graduates—though I was pleased to find that among them there was not so distinguished a character as Monops, or the friend whose antecedents I have touched upon in the last chapter.

Indeed they were all, with one or two palpable exceptions, men of character and conduct, highly respected in their profession—a profession, it should be remembered, to whom the community were at that time much indebted, when the responsibility of having so many of His Majesty's lieges daily committed to their care is considered,—and the estimation they were held in by many of the leading members of society was as much an acknowledgment of their manly and engaging art—although now and then less worthy motives than those of deserving the approbation of their Patrons would give admission to some few black sheep.

In London I was treated with every mark of kindness and familiarity by the owner of the establishment, as if he really wished to make up for former neglect. He seldom missed an evening of joining me in the coffee-room, and convers-

ing with me on indifferent subjects; at other times on things more immediately connected with his own business on various roads, but chiefly on that in which I was now most interested.

It so happened that there had been an accident the preceding winter to the Lynn coach—that is, the coach that ran the alternate days—by which a young lady had received some little injury, for which her Father demanded compensation, and would willingly have accepted 50*l*. for damages sustained. This was indignantly refused by the Cambridge proprietor, to whom the matter was left; consequently an action ensued, which was tried in London, when the plaintiff obtained a verdict for 700*l*. damages: thereby, with the costs—300*l*. more—the company suffered to the enormous amount of 1000*l*.

It was upon this occasion I first saw the Lynn proprietor,* and a strange spe-

* The late Rev. — Arrow.

cimen he was of the eccentricities of our nature. Should a naturalist or ornithologist meet with one of the feathered tribe whose distinctive features he cannot recognize in consequence of their partaking of the marks of more than one species or family, he immediately sets it down as a hybrid, or a mixture of two different species; a botanist does the same with plants; and I do not think I can better illustrate my view of this *rara avis* than by adopting the same classification. No one would have taken him for a minister of the Gospel, either from his dress, his manners, his conversation, or his habits; indeed, away from the scene of his ministration, he would have passed for anything but a meek and lowly successor of the Apostles.

Nevertheless he was such, of the sect called Independents; and, being at Lynn, I did not lose an opportunity of witnessing his performance in the pulpit, when

neither his doctrine nor his devotion struck me to be of that character which was likely to attract many followers. Yet he was what the world would call a clever, and was by no means indisposed to be an agreeable man. Fluent in his conversation, and well up in all the topics of the day, he was better calculated, I thought, for the social board than for the more sober display of his elocution in the pulpit.

Nature had cheated him of his fair proportion, and had sent him into the world with one hand deformed, which in some measure accounts for his having been brought up for the ministry, as that deformity incapacitated him for being a mechanic—although it did not prevent his trying his hand at driving four horses, which he now and then attempted—till one evening, turning a sharp corner in the village of Denver, his infirmity caused him to blunder: an overturn was the result, which put an end to his advancement in

that branch of the arts. He had in his vocation obtained some little celebrity as an orator, as well as a little surplus cash; the latter he had chosen to invest in coaching—this particular branch of business being at that time at a discount in Lynn.

On one occasion I remember to have met him, in juxtaposition with a preacher of another sect and sex. There had been a heavy fall of snow in the neighbourhood of Lynn, so much so that the road was obstructed; and the up-coach not arriving at Cambridge, I had to proceed with the down-coach. Pulling up to change at the "Lamb" at Ely, we there learnt that it would be in vain to attempt to go any farther, as the road was quite impassable. As the day was closing, the passengers agreed to make themselves comfortable for the night. A lady who was inside was very anxious to proceed, as her daughter, who resided at Lynn, was

ill. She said she would willingly trust her life in the hands of friend Cross, as she had every confidence in his care and skill (having ridden with me several times before); but if he said it would not be prudent to proceed, she would as willingly remain.

My passengers had assembled round a nice fire in one of the lower apartments of that then very homely specimen of even a country Inn. Among them was my friend of two callings, who was amusing the company with anecdotes of his sojourn in London, when a female servant entered, and said that the lady upstairs was desirous of speaking to her companions in travel, if they felt disposed to attend her.

Strange as this request was thought by some, the parson advised immediate compliance. On ascending the stairs and entering the room, we beheld a fine, matronly lady, habited as a Quakeress,

seated at the table with the Book before her. She rose to receive us. An air of placid benevolence illumined a countenance that had not yet given up all pretensions to meridian beauty ; and the serenity of her brow gave a sort of hallowed expression to eyes that beamed with intelligence. Her attitude, and the solemn dignity of her demeanour, with the command she at once took of my senses, reminded me for a moment of Mrs. Siddons ; and altogether I felt as if in the presence of a being of a superior order.*

A smile of gracious affability sat upon her lip as she asked us to be seated ; she then stated, that, as chance had thrown us together that evening, she thought a few words from the Book of Life would not be unacceptable. She now read a few verses from that portion of St. John's Gospel which enjoins brotherly love ; then, in a mild, unaf-

* This female was the late Mrs. Fry.

fect, and unassuming spirit, she discoursed on this all-important subject, setting forth its necessity, as regards the happiness of our fellow-creatures, and the enduring reward we had for it in our own consciences. Charity, humility, forbearance, and forgiveness, she included in the divine precept, and cited the Saviour as an example.

But it would be folly in me to attempt to do justice to this admirable woman's dissertation. She dismissed us with an extempore prayer, invoking the blessing and mercy of the Almighty ; and on my retiring to rest I could but contrast her pleasing conversational tone with the declamatory style of my coaching friend—her plain and simple elucidation of the holy text with his glittering and verbose display of evangelical learning.

Some few weeks after this my friend fell into pecuniary difficulties, and the

proprietors were informed the coach and horses were likely to be seized at Lynn by one of his principal creditors. Upon this I was sent down to make what arrangement I thought best to prevent the inconvenience that must arise from a stoppage, and to place the concern on some more sure and solid foundation, in the event of my friend not being able to resume his position ; that is, to seek out some one of the respectable inn-keepers in the town to become the Lynn proprietor.

This creditor was waiting the arrival of the coach from London, everyone seemed to stand in the greatest awe of him, he being one of the principal merchants in the town,—and the officer by his direction took possession of both coach and horses. I expostulating with him on so hasty a proceeding, he demanded to know who I was that I should dare to interfere. I told him that I was there to

represent the Lynn and London Coach Company, and denied his right, whatever his claim might be, to put them to a loss, and the public to a great inconvenience.

The officer then produced his warrant. I cried, "Take the horses with their harness, but touch the coach at your peril."

There were a number of people present, most of them wondering at my impudence at thus setting their great man at defiance.

"And why not the coach, Sir?" asked the gentleman.

"If you will walk into the office I will tell you, Sir," I replied.

All this altercation had taken place in the Inn yard, and I thought the office the most proper place to discuss a question of such moment.

The doors being closed, I said—

"I do not, Sir, for a moment doubt the validity or the legality of your in-

strument as far as it goes; but it is my duty to tell you that the coach is not the property of your debtor to make over, nor of any one of the proprietors: it is the sole property of the coachmaker, of whom the company hire it, and pay for it by the mile. You will, therefore, find you are exceeding the power your document gives you, if you persist in taking the coach with the horses."

Having said this, he allowed me to proceed, and I submitted that it would be much better for him and the Company, as well as the public, to allow the coach with the horses to continue their work. "It was customary," I added, "in our business for any one proprietor wishing to take his horses off, to give a month's notice, thereby giving time to find some one to cover the ground. I assured him that his security would not at all be damaged or diminished by so doing; and said if he thought there would

be any danger in the horses being out of sight of the officer, he could send a man to go backward and forward with them."

This seemed so reasonable to the gentleman that he gave his consent, and the company had the honour of his co-partnership till it was ultimately disposed of to the Sheriff's officer.

In the meantime an improvement in pace had manifested itself on the Cambridge road. The old established coaches were expedited an hour, and two others had been lately started to go up and down in a day. This caused the old Lynn to become more in disrepute; and I took occasion to observe one evening to my London friend, that the time had arrived when some exertion was necessary to put the Lynn coach on a more respectable footing, more in accordance with the times; for that already a new coach was talked of, and a new

company was about being formed.

To all this he replied, that the coach was very little use to him.

"Then," asked I, "why not remedy it?"

"Can you?" he said.

I replied, "I thought I could."

"Then go and take it in your hands, and make the best you can of it."

Upon this I took the earliest opportunity of putting myself in communication with the two principal men who had engaged to start the new coach—one at Lynn, the other at Ely; and it did not take much reasoning to convince them it would be better to join an old established concern, than to throw away money in opposition.

After some negotiation, which required no small amount of diplomatic skill to conduct, everything was arranged. The coach was to be put upon a new footing; the two new partners were to be admitted—

the Lynn man to have a portion of the ground vacated by the late proprietor, the Ely one a portion of the ground belonging to the Cambridge proprietor. And this proved the most difficult part of my task, as the two gents were both brewers, the one at Cambridge, the other at Ely, both in a large way; consequently they were unwilling to concede, though in a matter that had little or no connection with their other business.

The shrimps, to my great joy, were to be discarded, the stages to be shortened, the journey to be performed in less time, and—what affected me most—the London coachman, instead of stopping at Cambridge, was to go on to Ely, thus making the journey for me seventy miles per diem.

A month was allowed to carry this arrangement into effect, at the end of which time I took up my residence at Ely; and one of my profession being

quite a novelty in this small but ancient city, it was not long before I made the acquaintance of some of the principal inhabitants. In the settlement of the business I had gained the good opinion of the Ely proprietor, who, as I have said, was an extensive brewer, and he took pleasure in introducing me to the natives, as well as the surrounding yeomen. He gave up part of his time to my society, sometimes coming to my splendid hotel—that is, the one I have before spoken of, for there I took up my temporary abode—where most of the floors were of brick, and a carpet almost unknown, and, with another friend or two, would propose a rubber of whist; sometimes, on a market-day, I would take wine with him in the farmers' room.

On one occasion, I remember, two men of this class, well known for their great wealth, their great bulk, and their great

powers of imbibing, asked me to join them as soon as I was at liberty, as they wished to speak to me.

Not at all knowing what the nature of their business might be, I readily complied. The wine being put on the table, and the bottle making more speedy revolutions than I had of late been accustomed to, I was obliged to be on my guard; and it was some little time before I gathered from them that they wanted my assistance in getting an old friend and companion of theirs, who had a little run out, as they termed it, on to a box. I promised to use my interest with the London proprietor for him, though I could not promise them success. With this they were satisfied, but not with the wine, and, after I thought they had had a sufficient quantity (for bottle after bottle disappeared in amazing rapidity), I began to perceive they had another object besides the one named,

and I had a difficult matter to escape the effects, or elude the manifold potations with which they continually plied me, while they appeared to remain quite innocent of such excess. On my positively declining to have any more, they called for the bill and another bottle, and having discharged the one and swallowed the other, they departed, leaving me impressed with a good idea of the bodily and mental capacities of these stout yeomen of the Fens. The object of their solicitude, who was an example of the same species, was afterwards established on the box of the Wisbeach coach, and gave unmistakable evidence of his former associations.

As the Spring advanced (for the alteration had taken place exactly a twelve-month from the commencement of my officiate) the coach improved both in the numbers and the quality of the passengers, and the proprietors had not to re-

gret the loss of the carriage of the shrimps, which had always formed the staple of the coach's earnings. Now being on the best of terms with all the proprietors, and having myself become one by working a stage, I considered my position as established, and I felt myself justified in making an alteration in my condition I had long and earnestly contemplated.

And, first, I must revert to an awful and sudden visitation of Providence, which, distressing and lamentable as it was, opened the way to my ultimately revisiting St. Albans. I had finished my day's work in London, and had gone into the down office, as I always did, to enquire who or what there was booked for the morning, when the guard of the Liverpool, who generally arrived about half-an-hour before me, and was standing talking to the book-keeper, turned round when he saw me, and said—

"I have been waiting to see you, Sir."

"Me?" I exclaimed. "For what?"

The man hesitated for a minute, and walked out of the office. I followed him, and asked—

"What have you got to say to me?"

"Very bad news indeed, Sir."

"What about?" said I, growing impatient.

"Your intended Father-in-law is dead."

"It cannot be!" I replied.

"Yes, Sir, it is too true: he dropped down dead yesterday in church time."

Struck dumb almost with this sad intelligence—a little annoyed, too, at what I thought presumption on his part—scarcely knowing how to contain myself, I stammered out, "Who told you to tell me?" when he mentioned the name of a friend who was the first cause of my introduction to the family.

It would be impossible for me to de-

scribe my emotions at the time, or to give an adequate idea of the thoughts that rushed through my brain on the receipt of this melancholy catastrophe. The being whom it had pleased the Almighty thus suddenly to call from life was most deservedly endeared to a large family by every quality that adorns the Husband and the Father. His integrity and punctuality in all matters of business, and a proper discharge of all his relative duties to society, had gained him the goodwill of his neighbours; while the goodness of his heart and the soundness of his understanding, stored as his mind was with useful knowledge, had insured him the love and esteem of a large circle of relatives and friends. I admired and revered the man, and whenever I recall that line from Pope—

“An honest man’s the noblest work of God,”

I am convinced it would apply to him.

In an unhappy moment I had made that man an obstacle to my happiness, and now, by an act of Providence, that obstacle was removed.

If a writer of romance were to rack his brain, he could hardly discover a more difficult or delicate position for his hero than that in which I was placed by this sudden and unlooked for event. If I went down to offer my condolence to the Mother, and mix my tears with the Daughters', I was taking advantage of a dreadful bereavement to renew my visits and prosecute my suit—a natural inference, against the very suspicion of which, my spirit revolted. If I stayed away, where was my regard, where my sympathy, for the family in their distress ?

In this dilemma I walked to my friend the wine-merchant's, where two young ladies were on a visit; the daughters of a wealthy citizen of Norwich, to one

of whom a member of the medical profession, who has since attained a high position as well as great celebrity as a physician,* had proposed—and was then present. With him I had been some little time acquainted, and as fellow-feeling induces confidence, I imparted to him all that had occurred, asking how he would act under such conflicting circumstances. He replied, I remember, with great emphasis—

“If a thousand lions were at the door I would go in!”

It did not require this rhapsody to strengthen my intention of going to St. Albans, however I might afterwards act. Consequently, I procured a substitute, and went down by one of the early coaches, stopping at the house of my friend. His Sister, who was on the most intimate terms with the family, was not surprised to see me, or ignorant of the

* Dr. Farr.

object of my visit, but in the most earnest manner entreated me not to make my appearance at the house, as the effect on the feelings of the Mother in her then state of mind would only add to her sufferings, and give cause for unworthy constructions on my behaviour. Her thoughts being in unison with my own, and abhorring what might be deemed a mean attempt at being reinstated in the favour of the distressed widow, I wrote a note conveying my sorrowful feelings and returned to London.

It was not long before I heard that the Mother's health, at all times delicate, had given way under this awful bereavement; when Sir Astley Cooper, having been called in, recommended sea air. This was immediately attended to, and both Mother and Daughter repaired to Brighton. After remaining three or four months without reaping any ap-

parent benefit, the latter playfully said—
“Why not consult my physician?” This
leading to further explanation, I was
in the course of a short time rein-
stated in the good graces of the Mo-
ther, with whom I had always been a
favourite.

The most important occurrence in a
man's life, or woman's either, is matri-
mony; therefore, I trust I shall not be
thought diverging, or travelling far out
of my course, by thus relating the cir-
cumstances which preceded my again en-
tering into that holy state.

The ceremony took place at the Abbey
church, where we received the congratu-
lations of not only our own imme-
diate circle, but also of many of the
inhabitants, who, I believe, were sincere
in testifying their joy on the occasion;
and, after visiting Windsor Castle and
other places in our wedding trip, we
took possession of our new abode at

Ely. This, though not quite on so large a scale as my first establishment—I had so tutored my mind as to regard it equally as conducive to the domestic happiness and comfort I was desirous to renew—in the enjoyment of which I included my two children—who, arriving from school, helped to form our family circle.

Now, in Ely, as in all other Cathedral towns, the distinction between the clergy and laity was almost as strongly marked as in the days of Abbots and Monks. The richly-beneficed Prebends, walled round in their cloisters or college, as it is now termed, cut themselves off from all social communication with the trading population. Not being troubled with any cure of souls, they thought it sufficient condescension in monthly turn to consume the produce of their own land, and sought no further knowledge of such people than the supply of household

necessaries required; while the tradesmen and others, being principally tenants of the Dean and Chapter or the Bishop, could not aspire to any greater notice from persons so distinguished—two or three of whom reaped a princely revenue from the favours bestowed on them by their “Father in God.”

This very considerate Prelate had, through a long tenure of his diocese (the first in the kingdom for patronage), been enabled to provide for his sons and other relatives; and when the lease of office which we all hold from one great Giver was about to expire, a large living—the only similar one in his gift that he had not already had in his power to bestow—becoming vacant—he generously granted it to one of his own kin—then praised God who had allowed him to do another act of justice to his family before he died.

By such a distinction the society of the

inhabitants was very much circumscribed; and there being no resident gentry in the neighbourhood, it was not all who had opportunities of cultivating the rules intended to enhance the value of social and intellectual intercourse. It was impossible for an observer to reside there without comparisons obtruding—that did not tend to exalt their good breeding, extend their understanding, or swell the amount of their hospitality. Indeed, where the accumulation of wealth is the chief object, and a rigid economy in guarding it the most esteemed virtue, there is little room for the display of those kindly demonstrations of the human heart that render society agreeable.

To enumerate instances of the excess to which this inordinate feeling was carried, would neither be profitable nor amusing—yet I cannot help recording my recollection of a wealthy old lady who died while we were there, and it took

her daughter-in-law three days to count over the copper coins—pence, halfpence, and farthings—she had hoarded from the sale of milk, and other little gatherings from the poor. Once, I remember, I had occasion to call at the house of a wealthy farmer, on a Sunday evening in the depth of winter, when I observed a poor servant girl sitting shivering over the embers of a wood fire on the hearth, without a candle, and surrounded by appearances of the utmost penury; while outside the walls immense stacks of corn and hay, and yards full of healthy and thriving cattle, gave unequivocal evidence of wealth and prosperity.

But these were, perhaps, solitary examples; for there were many families who did not indulge in this, their seemingly ruling passion, to so great an extent. Among them was my friend the brewer I had inducted into the coaching firm, from whose family we both

received every mark of kindness and attention, as we did from a member of the medical profession — a profession that generally forms the advanced guard of intelligence and improvement in isolated districts.

Not to confine myself to one particular class, I must add that it was lamentable to observe the cloud of ignorance which then overshadowed this part of His Majesty's dominions. It was not many years before that its awful effects had been manifested in the Littleport riots, which terminated in capital punishment being inflicted on five misguided human beings, and in the deportation of many others for the same crime. One man, I remember, returned on my coach after an absence of eight years, having received an unconditional pardon;—and I shall not readily forget the violent ebullition of the poor fellow's feelings when informed by my horse-keeper that his wife, to whom

he was hastening in the fulness of his heart, had married in his absence.

Neither can I omit, in the first year of my residence at Ely, the execution of a man for murder, under the most cold-blooded circumstances, on the spot marked by the crime; and, as if to show what little progress knowledge had made in this part of our island, his body was gibbeted in sight of the turnpike road — the last of such inhuman exhibitions. Some two or three years afterwards the late Sir Robert Peel, having to pass that road on his way to a mansion he had hired near Downham, in Norfolk, had the disgusting object removed.

It is still within the memory of man that the Fens, in this district in particular, were under water three parts of the year; that many of the inhabitants lived chiefly by fowling and fishing; and it was not till after the energies and judgment of the Bedford

Level Corporation had rendered the land available for agricultural purposes, that there was any road upon which a stage-coach could travel; and it has since, by means of improved and improving drainage, been made most productive. Consequently, a certain class have suddenly, as it were, become opulent; and it is well known that men confined to employments that require their immediate superintendence are not so apt generally to catch at the advantages of social and intellectual improvement, as they are to enjoy the prospect and revel in the reality of increasing abundance.

Hence the disparity of wealth and intelligence so palpable in the laity in this district; hence, too, the princely incomes of some of our more favoured clergy; but, as we have witnessed the great improvement made in the last generation or two, we may safely conclude that not another will pass away

without railroads completing what a stage-coach begun—that is, without reaping the benefits of that free and familiar intercourse, which marks the progress of civilization among the people.

Amidst this waste of waters there are gems to be found of more than usual brightness. In this wilderness of rushes flowers can be plucked of exceeding beauty and fragrance, quite enough to embody the poet's sublime idea—

“ Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear ;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness in the desert air.”

The productions of Harrison, the Poet of the Fens, as he has been termed, have never yet been collected; but from what I remember to have seen of them, they were quite equal to many writings of the present day—as well in the air of wholesome sentiment they breathe—as in the terseness and vigour of their style. The poems of

Withers, the son of rustic parents, have been printed in two small volumes, and contain some beautiful specimens of the efforts of unassisted genius. The "Song of the Butterfly" is so replete with poetry, simply yet harmoniously expressed, the imagery is so graphically drawn and so judiciously disposed, that as a pastoral it may take its place with anything in our language.

Before I knew this part of the country I had frequently read in the newspapers the speeches and the exploits of a gentleman who resided near Huntingdon. His name had been associated and his politics classed with Hunt and Cobbett, *et sui generis*; but I am inclined to believe there was an undercurrent that ran in an opposite direction to the noisy advocacy he made in conjunction with these worthies, and made him confine his attention to less speculative views and more

attainable objects, those, too, within his own immediate locality.

He, like others of the same profession—he was a lawyer—commenced his political career in the extreme West, where he might the more readily attract the rays of the rising sun, that would hasten the growth of his ambition or his interest, and gain those advantages many had acquired by pursuing the same course. If his assurance was not equal to the blacking manufacturer's, his talents and his position were far superior. If his principles were not quite so lax as the powerful writer's in the "Register," he had more tact and more influence in his neighbourhood.

Like that great master of the pure and vigorous English composition he vainly attempted to imitate, he was the principal agitator in establishing a pro-

vincial paper,* that should advocate popular, that is, Radical measures. He also bore a conspicuous part at all County and other meetings; and, by presenting himself as a candidate for a close Borough, where he knew he had not a shadow of a chance of being returned, he at least gained notoriety. By a fair share of oratory, and by constantly disputing the power of the aristocracy, he became popular among the less learned but more opulent and really independent yeomen, who were then growing into importance. By these means he had gained their good opinion, as by his bland and familiar manner, and his unostentatious hospitality, he had their goodwill; and an opportunity occurring shortly after the introduction I am about to speak of, he was placed by them in a situation that curbed his Radical propensities, while his talents and services

* The "Independent Press."

recommended him to the interests of some members of that aristocracy whose political acts and opinions he had lavishly abused.

William Cobbett was a very unpopular man in his neighbourhood the short time he lived at Botley, chiefly arising from his innate dislike to the aristocracy and their amusements. One day, I remember, when, with the late Mr. Delme's hounds, meeting at Wickham Toll-bar, we had run a fox hard in a most difficult country. Three or four of us, all well mounted, followed a bold rider up a steep high bank out of a hard flinty lane, and landed in a fallow adjoining Mr. Cobbett's house and garden, which was surrounded with a very high fence; consequently, we trotted up to the gate that led in the direction of our game. This we found chained and locked, with long ash poles interlaced between the bars, that defied all attempts at removal.

While one of the horsemen, having dismounted, was vainly trying to knock the lock off with his hammer-handled whip, a gentleman walked up to us, foaming at the mouth with rage, and desired us, in no measured language, immediately to desist. Upon one of the company asking him the way out, he told us to go out the way we came in. This I, for one, knew to be impossible, except at the risk of the necks of both horse and rider. Just at the moment the cry of the hounds coming down the wind, broke on our ears, and I pricked my horse into a gallop.

"Follow me, gentlemen," cried I—"I can find a way out." I led them down the field, and, easily topping two quickset fences in and out Mr. Cobbett's garden, we soon rejoined our companions, leaving the young gentleman, who was one of the family, railing at the top of his

voice—boiling over with disappointed rage.

I was standing one afternoon, in the early part of my stoppage at Ely, in the bar of the "Lamb," (if a small slip taken from the passage—with an uneven brick floor—a few shelves upon which stood some dusty bottles—and from which dangled, by way of ornament, some cabbage-nets holding pieces of half-squeezed musty lemon—deserve that appellation,) and looking through the latticed window, I saw a gentleman with a most remarkable visage, shorn as it was of its most prominent feature, advancing up the yard. He enquired of the landlady, who was sitting quiet in the corner, when he entered, in a brusque familiar manner, what he could have for dinner.

"Pitchcocked eels and mutton chops, sir," was the answer.

"I might have known that," said he,

good-humouredly. "Well, that must do."

The landlady disappeared to give the necessary orders.

"The staple commodity here, sir," continued he, in the same strain, but addressing me; "I have used this house five-and-twenty years and never had any other answer.

"You've not dined, have you?" added he, with all the manner of an old acquaintance.

"No, I was about to partake of the same fare."

"Then we'll dine together. Dick," cried he to the waiter, "lay the cloth for two."

"Where, sir?"

"In the best room in the house, to be sure. *My* wine, remember."

"Yes, sir."

"I am obliged to be particular," he ob-

served, again turning to me, "or they'd give you sloe juice and call it port wine. Excuse me for ten minutes, I have a call to make, but shall be back by the time the first course is ready."

In the meantime, I took possession of the best room, which by the hostess's directions had been put to rights—that is, the floor had been fresh sanded, all that could be done at so short a notice, and all it needed; for half-a-dozen chairs and an old club-footed mahogany table, a steel fender with an edge sharp enough to sever any limb from the body that might accidentally fall on it, with some very lean fire-irons, that might have been forged by Tubal Cain himself—were all the room contained in the shape of furniture. The table was covered with a cloth that matched the floor in colour and evenness of surface. Some black-handled knives and forks were properly disposed at each end, while two blown-glass salt-cellars, with di-

minutive bone spoons, ornamented the opposite corners.

The waiter bearing the eels, and my new acquaintance, entered at the same time, and we both seated ourselves at the table. He seemed by no means discomposed by the homeliness of all around him, for, taking up one of the forks, he jammed it twice or thrice through the homespun, advising me to do the same, as it was the only way, he said, to ensure clean steel.

The marks which this hasty operation left behind gave ample proof of its necessity, but did not prevent either of us making as good a meal as the scanty supply of fish, with a chop to follow, allowed. This dispatched, with rather a wry face at the misquoted sherry, the waiter entered with the pastry.

"Is this all you have in the house?" said my friend.

"That's what mistress allows generally to two gentlemen, Sir," replied the waiter.

Then, gently removing a crust of the colour and consistency of a piece of parchment, my friend counted twenty bottled gooseberries at the bottom of a very shallow dish.

"Economy is the order of the day here," I said.

"You might have given it a more appropriate name, I think," he replied.

But to say no more of this very spare meal, and the observations it gave rise to, for which the port wine that bore his name made ample amends, I found myself in company with a man of enlightened understanding, great experience in political affairs, with a thorough knowledge of his kind—evinced, I thought, a little too broadly in exposing the vanities and absurdities of his late coadjutors. He was one of the few who had done good in his generation, by dispersing the cloud of darkness and promulgating truly liberal principles through the land. Having made the

nature and condition of the Fens his early study, he took every opportunity of proposing and advocating measures that should improve the value of the soil and materially advance the interests of the inhabitants.

We spent the evening together, enjoying each other's conversation to a late hour, though I was more intent on the information I was obtaining than in dilating on my own antecedents, which he seemed at intervals desirous to ascertain. This acquaintance, if a free and familiar, though but occasional intercourse does not deserve a better name continued, until the rail put an end to my career, which he did not long survive. Peace to his manes ! *

* Samuel Wells, Esq., late Registrar to the Bedford Level Corporation.

CHAPTER III.

VARIETIES.

One of the Cloth—An Alteration—Long Sojourn in India
 —Lucknow—Hero of the Ancient Times—Great Man—
 A Lesser One—The Peer—A Member of Parliament and
 Whipper-in—A Star of the First Magnitude—Dido—
 Revenge—Poor Attempt at Wit—Norfolk Baronet—
 How to Remedy an Error—Swell Mobsman—Personality
 —A Trio—Ludicrous Accident.

THE great competition and rapid advance towards perfection in stage-coach travelling, caused continual changes to be made in the different appointments that were necessary to satisfy a progressive community.

Our coach was now patronized by all the clergy and gentry of the Western part of

Norfolk, and they were extremely jealous of any other road possessing a more convenient or better appointed public conveyance than themselves. That they should not have cause to complain, I as continually urged my friend, the brewer, at Ely, to adopt such alterations and improvements as I thought expedient for the benefit of the concern. He had the fullest confidence in my experience, and being very fond of driving, I had many opportunities of instructing him in the noble art, while giving him a proper understanding of stage-coach business.

In the last alteration that had been made, in regard to having three coachmen instead of four, the situation of the lower coachman had been materially improved, as everyone thought, because by it, he had the benefit of two coaches a day; still he had from four to five hours at Ely, that hung very heavy on his hands.

This man had long been established

on the coach, indeed, he never drove any other. He had, by his civil and obliging manner, secured the good will of the inhabitants of Lynn, and advanced in the favour of the gentry in the surrounding district.

Bob was no blustering, bouncing, flash dragsman, like one or two I have already described, but a well-conducted, straightforward, honest sort of man, who aspired to nothing beyond being on good terms with his employers and his passengers; with his profession and with himself. Neither was he any great scholar—indeed, he had been educated for the box, and the box alone: for as a boy, I was told, he used to stand between the knees of his brother-in-law of half-a-pipe notoriety, and learn from him—an excellent schoolmaster—how, in vulgar parlance, to handle the ribbons.

Thus had he grown, as it were, with the coach, and become part and parcel of the

establishment; and when it shone forth from the cloud of dirty shrimp baskets that surrounded it, and Bob was called upon to do the polite to old ladies and young gentlemen, he acquitted himself with much credit, as well as satisfaction, to his clients.

His vocabulary was not very extensive; neither did his discrimination keep pace with the *age*; for Master Henry and Master Fred, Master Richard and Master Ed'ard, were applied as familiarly in full-blown manhood to the scions of affluent families as they had been to delighted and ingenuous youth, when asking permission to sit by his side. He had always a good-natured smile on his lips, and a merry twinkle in his eye, when he saw any of them, and some quaint saying—for Bob was a good mimic, and a wit in his way—which generally elicited a hearty laugh, and as hearty a shake of the hand.

Bob, also, so conducted himself as at all times to command the respect of his inferiors; and he really was what Falstaff intimated to Prince Henry—
“Bob Walker with my familiars, Robert with my brothers and sisters, and *Mr.* Walker with all England.”

The deferential “good-night” of the horse-keeper when drawing the last of the four cloths from the near wheel-horse at Southery—“Good-night, Mr. Walker, Sir;” Bob’s lively chirrup to his prads, and “Good-night, Brown, boy,” in reply—always called forth a smile from his companions, and will be remembered in conjunction with the Lynn coach by some of us as long as memory lasts.

With this member of the profession, then, it was my interest and my inclination—for he was a good-tempered man—to be on the best of terms; and, I think I may say, that during the five-

and twenty years we drove together we never had an angry word.

He had complained to me how irksome his time was at Ely—indeed, he would frequently ride on to Cambridge on purpose to converse with me about it; and one day he ventured to ask me if I should like to drive double. Upon further explanation, I found it was his wish to drive from Lynn to Cambridge and back in the day, and that our mutual friend, the brewer, had referred him to me, to learn whether I should like to drive from London to Cambridge and back.

“You know, boy,” said he, “there is old Jack Thorogood drives from Norwich to London—that’s 116 miles every day; and there’s old friend Bob Snow* drives from London to Brighton and back in a day.”

* This celebrated performer on the “Brighton Dart” had heretofore driven the Lynn.

"Yes," added I, "and there's Sam Goodman does the same."

"Then why not you and I, boy?" enquired he.

Now, I knew very well that if I consented the thing would be done; but as such an arrangement would displace the man who drove the opposite day from Ely, I demurred—though in the rest of the journey up, I thought a great deal about it.

In the first place, I had had enough of the Fens; my family was on the increase, my wife's health was not very good, and she was a long way from her friends at St. Albans, as I was from my native Hampshire. I therefore concluded that such an alteration would be very beneficial, as I should have but one home, and a double benefit every day.

Consequently, on my return to Ely, I on the following morning waited on my friend

the brewer ; and, on my broaching the subject, he readily fell in with my idea. I named to him the only obstacle in the way of such an arrangement, and pointed out to him the way in which it might be removed without injury to the individual, and, therefore, with satisfaction to myself ; this was, to use his influence — which had grown to be considerable — with the London proprietors, to give him as good an appointment on another road. It was in due time accomplished, and I removed my family to London.

The benefit arising from the alteration I most prized was the opportunity it afforded me of introducing my wife to my sisters, and of now and then enjoying their society. It was about this time that my third sister, rather than witness the declining fortunes of our remaining parent, decided on going to India, as companion to a lady of title and her daughter. The latter marrying in the second year after their departure from

England, my sister had the option of returning, or accepting the hand of a settler at Cawnpore. She chose the latter.

After having survived two husbands, she was one of the many females beleaguered in our intrenchments at Lucknow: where she had resided many years, her second husband, not long deceased, being attached to the court of the King of Oude.

Naturally intelligent and observing, with a fair share of accomplishments, experience had given her a thorough knowledge of the native character; while her husband's situation, and her intercourse with both English and Native chiefs—to whom she acted as interpreter, and sometimes as amanuensis—had made her acquainted with the political movements that preceded the awful outbreak which convulsed this magnificent part of our Empire.

In her correspondence with me and other individuals of our family, which is so

far valuable as containing the opinions of the longest resident European female in India, she condemned the annexation of Oude, as insulting to the pride of the Court, as in direct violation of former treaties with the East India Company, and as outraging the prejudices of the natives. In this one act she foresaw the discontent and the dislike it gave all classes to our rule; and to it she attributes all the evils that have since arisen.

She was possessed of every comfort, and lived in comparative ease and affluence. Her house being at the extremity of the intrenchments, and nearest the city, was made a barrack or fort, and therefore was made the principal point of attack by the bloodthirsty Sepoys, who, both by their acts and gesticulations, threatened annihilation to the little garrison and all within it.

It was in a critical hour of this eventful siege, when the mines of the rebels were making fearful progress towards my sister's

residence, when ball after ball had riddled its walls and destroyed its contents, even to the very hangings worked by her fingers, that the husband of her most intimate friend, seeing the straits to which the garrison was reduced, nobly volunteered an undertaking, that for sagacity, spirit, and daring, has eclipsed anything known in Indian or European warfare.

The relief of the garrison of Lucknow, and the saving of its inmates, male and female, from indiscriminate slaughter, must be attributed to the self-devotion of one man,* who in the night sought the camp of Sir Colin Campbell, now Lord Clyde, a distance of twenty miles; and, after facing perils the most imminent, either in deceiving the pickets and passing through the lines of the rebels, or by secreting himself in what appeared impassable morasses, and in fording or swimming rivers—succeeded, in the nick of time, footsore,

* T. Kavanagh, Esq.

weary, and exhausted, in reaching our outposts. He delivered despatches from Sir James Outram to the Commander-in-chief, who immediately put his army in motion, and, under the guidance of this brave and intelligent citizen, soon achieved the deliverance of all—men, women, and children, soldiers and civilians—from the horrors of starvation, combined with the dreadful and constant apprehension of a worse than cruel death.

It is almost needless to say, that this gentleman's name—which ought and, no doubt, will be ever remembered with gratitude by all—has long since been before the public in connection with this daring exploit, which the author has had the inexpressible pleasure of hearing from his own lips since his arrival in England, whither he was summoned to receive his due reward at the hands of his sove-

reign in the shape of the Victoria Cross.* After listening with intense interest to his simple but spirit-stirring narrative, the author could not help comparing it with the very graphic description of the nocturnal enterprise of Diomed and Ulysses by the Greek—or the equally beautiful but more melancholy paraphrase of “Nisus and Euryalus” by the Latin poet.

My sister accompanied the other ladies in their escape from the hands of these sanguinary and merciless ruffians in the night, on foot, carrying under her arm a small bundle containing all that remained to her of household goods and apparel, and of years of gathering of small but valuable mementoes intended for her relatives in England.

But the tale of the last six months of her residence in that important portion of our Indian possessions has been cir-

* See “The Victoria Cross—How I Won it.”

cumstantially related, (with all that she, with others of her sex, suffered) by two civilians resident during the siege—nevertheless, I may perhaps be permitted to add, that after passing, unhurt, from the fire of the rebels, who lined the road for the first three miles—although one of her companions was shot in the arm, and afterwards died from the effects of the wound—she, with much fatigue and suffering, got safe to Cawnpore, and thence floated down the Ganges to Calcutta, whence she sailed in the steamer to Southampton, where I met her with a degree of satisfaction it is impossible to express.

It will scarcely be believed, except by those whom it immediately concerns, that no compensation has yet been awarded to the sufferers in that critical and destructive siege, although 1,000,000*l.* sterling has been sent out to the Indian Government for that purpose.

My time now became wholly devoted to the coach. From eight in the morning till seven in the evening I was on the box, and, it may reasonably be supposed, encountered a variety of character, and increased my acquaintance with all classes. Masters of colleges, Professors, Tutors, Fellows, frequently sat beside me; Church dignitaries—nay, even a Bishop I have had on the box. Indeed, were I to enumerate all the men of distinction who honoured me with their company, I should include every degree of rank in the Nobility—Cabinet Ministers of both parties, as the Treasury Benches were occupied by Whig or Tory, Conservative or Liberal; Members of Parliament, Baronets and Squires, Clergy and Gentry, Generals and Admirals, and all who resided in, or visited at, the mansions with which the county of Norfolk abounds. To these must be added, merchants and bankers, professional men, such

as lawyers and doctors, engineers and surveyors, ship-builders and ship-masters, *cum multis aliis*. It would be difficult to describe all the remarkable characters that came under my observation, and my limits will only allow me to sketch a few.

Lord William Bentinck accompanied me on the box, I remember, on the elevation of his relative, Mr. Canning, to the Premiership. I found him a not very loquacious companion, his conversation being principally confined to agricultural statistics; for this *attaché* to the Sicilian Government—this active commander and talented diplomatist, and, soon afterwards, the wise and popular Governor-General of our Indian possessions—had been of late years acting Cincinnatus in the marsh lands of Norfolk.

His manners were cold and distant, I thought—perhaps properly so to one in my position, and to my enquiring mind

—though far from haughty or austere ; and his countenance, with a shade of the benign, was sufficiently expressive of his descent from the friend and minister of our great Dutch deliverer.

His friend and neighbour, and associate in his agricultural pursuits—and who afterwards accompanied him to India, where he died—was my frequent companion. He was as voluble as the noble lord was chary in his communications ; but we had known each other in early days—I as a midshipman of a man-of-war on the Indian station, he as secretary to old Admiral Rainier, who commanded there, where he had amassed sufficient wealth to invest in some rich alluvial soil in the neighbourhood of Lynn, immediately adjoining Lord William's. Here he sat himself down as a country gentleman and a magistrate, and upheld his position with tact and dignity, winning, by his frank manner

and business habits, the confidence and the approbation of the community.*

In that part of Norfolk, extending beyond Lynn eastward—a fine shooting country—are situated the princely domains of Holkham and Houghton, and it contains other mansions and residences of the aristocracy, whence I had, to make use of a hackneyed expression, a host of clients. The noble owner of Raby Castle,† before he inherited the dukedom, living then in this district, was one of the most frequent of my passengers, and in his journey up and down always sat beside me. His manner was at all times affable, and his conversation, if not familiar, was not rendered disagreeable by his sense of the difference of rank.

In the Right Honourable Secretary to the Treasury, whom I have before men-

* T. Hoseason, Esq.

† The Duke of Cleveland, then Earl of Darlington.

tioned, I had a most agreeable as well as a most communicative companion. From his shooting box in Norfolk it was his custom to write me a note the day preceding, to order dinner for himself and friend or friends (always including myself) apart from the other passengers, at the house on the road where we daily stopped for refreshment.

Upon one occasion, I remember, he had with him a companion who had distinguished himself both in the field and in the senate. He had long been the Radical Member for the Borough of Southwark; and from his brave and active qualities as a General, Buonaparte—in one of his bulletins—had designated him as a brigand—a sure proof of some signal cause he had given to call forth that great chief's notice.

After doing especial service in raising, forming, and commanding the Lusitanian Legion, he was attached to the Emperor.

Alexander's staff in the Russian campaign, and with that potentate entered Paris in 1814. But the military career of this gallant and enterprising officer is too well known, as well as his participation in effecting the escape of the condemned Lavalette from his dungeon in the Conciergerie, for me to descant upon.

At the time I speak of he was under a cloud—if the displeasure of his sovereign, who had exercised his prerogative by erasing his name from the Army List—for the part he had taken in the funeral of Queen Caroline, deserve that appellation.

If there were one man more than another, who, by his exploits during the war, both in the Peninsula and on the Continent of Europe, had most delighted me, and in whose treatment I felt the deepest sympathy, which I believe was common to the whole nation, it was this chivalrous and high-minded gentleman. It

was, therefore, with no little gratification, I took his proffered hand, and received his marked attention at the dinner-table.

It was winter, and he travelled inside, therefore I had but half-an-hour in his company; but that half-hour was sufficient for me to observe a peculiar gravity in his aspect that surprised me, though intelligence and determination were sufficiently developed in his—what a casual observer would call—placid features.

His manners to me were simple and unassuming; while to his equals, I should judge, they would be attractive and confiding. His voice was soft and pleasing—very unlike one used to command — and altogether his easy carriage enhanced the good opinion I had formed of a man of known capacity and eminence.

It was not long after two or three of these meetings—when a demise of the

Crown took place—that I exulted in the first act of King William the Fourth, which restored to rank, honours, and emoluments one who had deserved so well of his country, as Sir Robert Thomas Wilson.

Another anecdote I must relate of my kind friend, the member for Coventry. When speaking of game, I once inadvertently stated, about grouse-shooting time, that I had not, from living so much in the south, ever tasted this bird—he, after assuring me that I should not be long without doing so, on the following day forwarded two brace, with his initials on the direction.

About this time a very questionable production made its appearance, purporting to be the memoirs of a “celebrated courtesan,” which at the time made a great noise beyond the mere literary world. The publisher of this shameless *exposé* of the weakness of our

common nature was well known; and the gentleman who had the credit of editing or compiling the heroine's reminiscences, and sharing in the produce, I had met in private company.

On my first perusal I condemned the book, as I strongly suspected it to be nothing more or less than an infamous attempt to extort money.

This formed the subject of conversation one morning between me and the Right Honourable gentleman. He acknowledged that I was right in my conjecture, and stated that he knew a person who had been applied to for a sum of money to have his name omitted from a long list of those members of the aristocracy who came within the frail fair one's acquaintance. This he had refused. Whether the threatened consequence followed, I was not then aware. On his next journey up, it coming on to rain, he got inside, and when

we stopped to dine, he came laughing into the room, stating that there was a female in the coach, who had told him she was about to write a book—her own autobiography—and hoped he would put his name down as a subscriber.

“Do you know her?” said he.

“Perfectly well,” I replied.

“Not a little assurance, I think, to ask me to appear in print.”

“Better there,” I rejoined, “than in the pages of another female author I could name.”

A loud laugh, and “Well said,” was all my imprudent sally elicited.

Apropos of this lady, for she was such, both by birth and education, who thus importuned my Right Honourable friend: she was not a “blue” but an eccentric certainly, and, for the proper acceptance of that term, I must refer my reader to the page of the great lexicographer; though he applies it in the masculine gender only.

Her possession of this singular characteristic exposed her to the laughter of the vulgar, though from those who knew her history it drew forth commiseration.

When I first knew her, the personal charms that nature had bestowed on her were on the wane; and from others I learned, that, like the widow of Sicheus, she had once fondled the gentle god, and that, like her, had been deceived and deserted; but not like her did she immolate herself, and cherish the dying hope that her shade would follow her destroyer in all his wanderings. She resolved to haunt with her real presence the authors of her disappointment, and they must have supposed her gifted with the power of ubiquity—for, wherever the happy couple went, they found this victim of unrequited affection. On one occasion, for mixing a little of the animosity of the viper with the innocence of the dove, she found her-

self incarcerated for a week in Maidstone gaol.

In consequence, then, of this enduring attachment, she was a frequent customer, and in fine weather would seat herself, with her maid, on the roof; and her misfortunes not having disabled the member that can both charm and cheat the understanding, she would pour in my ears a rhodomontade of unintelligible, self-important occurrences, that only terminated with the journey, and an appeal to my patronage for her long-intended literary production.

This was her constant theme, and she would let no occasion slip without endeavouring to enlist the sympathies of strangers, particularly of the male sex, and those belonging to the higher class of society.

It is not to be wondered at, then, that in her aberration she should fasten on this distinguished member of the Whig aristo-

cracy; for his handsome, portly appearance, and his urbane manner, would almost invite communication from the most diffident, however his general bearing might be marked by the pride of family connections.

This has long been set down as the distinctive mark of the great Whig families and their followers; but the highly respected owner of Hillington, who represented the Western division of the county of Norfolk, in that interest, for two or three parliaments, and was frequently during the session my companion on the box, was an exception to the rule.* His conversation was at all times easy, familiar, and agreeable, and his demeanour that of a well-bred gentleman.

Upon one occasion I remember, that on a wet Spring morning, I found the coach had been overbooked, which subjected the proprietors to the charge of

* Sir William B. Ffolkes.

a post-chaise the whole distance, involving an expense of ten pounds; in which the unfortunate book-keeper who had committed the error would be unmercifully mulcted. On my arrival at Kingsland Gate, having already three insides, one of whom was the Baronet, two others, whose names had been entered in the book for a week preceding, claimed their places.

I had been made acquainted with the error prior to my mounting the box, and earnestly entreated by the delinquent to do all I could to save him from the penalty.

Accordingly I got down, and, knowing that with rational people a plain statement of facts has always the best effect, I explained, in as few words as possible, the nature of the dilemma we were in.

"You are bound to find a conveyance, coachman," said a crusty old limb of the law, who sat muffled up in one corner.

"I am aware of that, Sir," I replied; "but I was about to submit to you the

hardship that one poor subordinate of the establishment will have to suffer, if you are all determined to take advantage of this error and keep your seats."

"How do you propose to remedy it?" asked the Baronet.

"It can only be remedied in one way," said I, "and that is, by one getting out."

"And which of us is that to be?—are we to cast lots?" he enquired.

"Why," I replied, "in common fairness, it ought to be the last who was booked. This lady and gentleman," (who were standing at the coach-door—I knew them to be the widow of Buonaparte's General, Drouét, and her son,) "have been booked a week."

"And who was the last, pray?"

"You, Sir William."

Without another word or further delay, he got out, and, taking the seat beside me, which I had purposely reserved, we pro-

ceeded on our journey, and he said not a word in disparagement of my decision.

I mention this simple act of courtesy as indicative of a mind fraught with a proper and just understanding of things of far greater moment. When such conduct is considered in contradistinction to the pertinacious and selfish adherence to what the law awards as right, the individual is placed in a very estimable point of view; for where one such incident as I have spoken of occurs, under similar circumstances, the usual penalty has been exacted by ninety-nine others.

But the reader is not to suppose that I was always accompanied by men of such standing, or of such correct views; on the contrary, I have had them of a widely different nature, though it was not their custom to make an exhibition of their evil ways. I had, however, one

who gloried in showing himself an accomplished villain.

The first time I saw him, he had seated himself on the roof in Bishopsgate Street, while I had gone up to the office in the yard for my way-bill. On my return a neighbour told me who he was, and gave me a short outline of his antecedents, which were not very flattering; but they were not unknown in this vicinity. It was his common practice, I found, to cheat every one he could, and he attempted a fraud on me that morning. When I asked him for the fare, he said he would pay at Downham; arrived here, he promised the fare when we arrived at Cambridge; but, on my insisting that he should either pay or get down, he chose the former.

This man was a great annoyance to me, although I did not let him see this. He would always sit beside me when he could,

which I, as often as I could, manœuvred to prevent. He had a bold familiar air, and a fluent as well as specious tongue, which, with a tolerable good-looking face, and no small share of impudence, caused him to pass current with many as a man of some import, though it did not require a very keen observer to detect the vulgar character beneath the assumed garb of gentility. His conversation was at all times in derision of morality and religion, and, concluding "all men were liars," he thought himself justified in practising every sort of deception upon the simple and unwary, that he might despoil them of their coin—always taking care to keep within the pale of the law.

He was quite an adept in the art possessed by one of Dickens's heroes—that of making exchanges in hats, great-coats, whips, and even a set of harness he has been known to purloin in this way. Horse-stealing was too easy of detection,

and led to too serious a result, for him to encounter the risk. I believe he delighted in dishonesty; for he would show as much ingenuity, and take as much trouble, to rob a chimney-sweep of sixpence, as he would one of his own class of one hundred pounds.

He occupied a farm in the Fens, and on one occasion, when he had purchased some bullocks of a neighbouring farmer, he offered in payment a bill, which the other, having been assured that it was as good as money, readily agreed to take. He ignorantly signed his name, accordingly, to what he supposed was a regular draft at two months, which, when it had come to maturity, turned out to be a receipt for the money—250*l*.

But to come to what I witnessed myself. It was one cold frosty morning shortly after Christmas; I was on my journey down, with him on the box—the only passenger I had on the outside—when a man,

having the appearance of a mechanic, held up his hand. I stopped, and, saying he was going to Hoddesdon, he got up, and sat on the front of the roof behind us.

He was no sooner seated than my hero addressed him—

“Just from town?—Been up to receive your dividend, I suppose?”

The man said he had gone up for that purpose, but had met with a great disappointment. This led to further questions. What was he?—A master-bricklayer. What could he earn per week?—Twenty-five shillings. What property had he?—Four cottages. What do they bring in?—Five pounds a-year each.

“And you are in a little difficulty?”

“To tell you the truth, I am.”

The man then told a tale of deep and pitiable distress: the recent death of his daughter after a long illness, the expense of the doctor, funeral, &c. The

fellow pretended to have compassion on him, and, telling him that he went about for the purpose of assisting the distressed, asked him what sum he thought would set him straight with the world. The poor fellow, believing his questioner to be what he was only enacting, innocently enough said twenty pounds would set his mind at rest; the latter immediately unbuttoned his coat, put his hand in his breeches pocket, and took out twenty sovereigns—counterfeits they might have been—and, holding them up to the man, said—

“There—they are yours.”

The bricklayer turned his eyes up to heaven in utter astonishment, and invoked God's blessing upon his supposed benefactor. I was about to denounce his trifling with the man's feelings, but determined to see the end of it, as I suspected some dishonest design.

“You have no objection to give me an acknowledgment for it?”

"Oh, no, Sir. You shall have my handwriting, and I am to have yours."

"Exactly so. When we get to Hoddesdon you shall have it."

At Hoddesdon we soon arrived, when, the schemer turning round to his dupe, who had got his purse or pocket-book out to pay me his fare, said, "You must give me eighteen-pence to purchase the stamp." He deliberately put his finger and thumb in and took out one shilling and a sixpence. "Now come with me," he added. He then led him into a back room, saying to the landlady as he passed the bar, "Give that poor man a pint of beer," desiring him at the same time to remain there while he went to get the stamp. He now came chuckling to me with the one shilling and sixpence in his hand, exclaiming—

"There, Mr. Coachman — that is more than you have earned this morning."

"Yes," I said, for I could no longer contain my detestation of his knavish trick ;

"and if you do not immediately return it, you shall not proceed with me."

"Don't be a fool," he cried, half in earnest.

"Fool or not," I replied, "I do not stir from this, till you have returned the eighteen-pence you have robbed him of."

The county police had not been established, or I would have given him in charge. My horses were put to and ready, when the bricklayer, tired, I suppose, of waiting, or suspecting the trick, came running out.

"Give it him back," I repeated. Seeing my determination, the cheat reluctantly, though with a forced laugh, complied.

"I did not think you meant to serve me so," was all his dupe ventured to say.

On our arrival at the next stage, where we lunched, as did the passengers of the Wisbeach coach, the baffled cheat went

into the room. I followed, and, seeing him shake hands with one of the passengers, whom I knew, I addressed the latter—

“I do not know if you are aware of it, but you are shaking hands with one of the most consummate scoundrels I ever met with.”

“Order, order, Sir!” said he; “order is the first law of nature.”

“True,” I said, “and it is a pity you have been suffered to violate it so long—for you ought to have been hanged long ago.”

Saying this, I left the room. When he rejoined me, during the remainder of the journey he attempted to turn into ridicule my sympathy for his intended victim, whom he represented as a hypocritical, canting rascal, at the same time extolling his own masterly display of cunning, by his almost successful attempt at robbing him of his last shilling, the defeat of which

he attributed to my foolish interference.

It was impossible that I should have had many such customers, for I never knew his equal. He went away from that part of the country long before I ceased to drive. His name has since figured in our law and police courts; but I do not know if he ever reached that goal to which he appeared to be hastening, and which the law has pronounced a proper termination to such a knavish career.

At another time, I remember to have had what was likely to have been a serious affair, with three gentlemen passengers, who had not the wit the last mentioned was possessed of, to keep within the pale of the law. They were rewarded for their expertness in making an entry into other people's houses without their knowledge and consent, and appropriating their goods and chattels, with a situation under Government in the colonies.

These fellows were seated in the dickie,

as the hindermost part of the coach is termed, accompanied by a gentleman who paid them particular attention. At Barkway Hill, which we always of necessity slowly ascended, the three worthies, closely allied as they were, began descending together. One of them was on the ground, and the other two in the act of descending, when their attentive friend called to his superior, who at the time was in conversation with me on the box. On looking round and seeing what was going on, he jumped over on the roof, pulled a pistol from his pocket, and cried to the man who was on the ground by name, "If you do not immediately get up I'll shoot you!" He cocked and presented his pistol. The fellow slowly re-ascended after some little persuasion from the gentleman behind, and re-seated himself, as did the others. One of them, it appeared, was a most desperate character; and, as we proceeded, my box companion stood up with his back to

me, and, looking at him in particular, with his pistol in his hand, called out, in a determined manner—

“I'll have you all in Newgate this night, either dead or alive!”

This seemed to quiet them for a time, although they would break out in threats and abuse, of which I came in for the greatest share; for, at the first change after we had left Barkway, I had suggested to my friend—the propriety as well as the efficacy of attaching one of the bracelets with which the wrists of such persons are usually adorned, to the iron of the dicky, to prevent a repetition of the attempt at escape, and this was immediately adopted. The suggestion called down on me a threat of sending some of their acquaintances to *crack my crib* on the first favourable opportunity.

At Ware we were offered further assistance, but the officer in charge not thinking it necessary, we proceeded without, and in

due time the constables safely deposited their charge in Newgate.

It was my custom frequently to amuse my home circle with the adventures of the day, and the little ones would as often listen with the gravest attention ; but this had a far more serious effect upon them than I expected or desired ; for they would not go to bed for weeks afterwards without one of them asking, with a most serious countenance, when the man was coming to “crack our crib,” or “did I think he would come to-night.” After a time this fear wore off, though the circumstance is fresh in all their memories.

Our two coaches—that is, the up and down coach—used to meet at Trumpington, two miles from Cambridge on the London side ; consequently, as we carried time-pieces, we were both of us enabled to judge the time to a minute.

Upon one occasion, my partner, having a little business at Cambridge, sent the

porter on with the coach, and he, wishing to make the most of his short drive, never having hold of four horses before, did not stop at the usual place, but came on sixty or seventy yards farther in the village, and pulled up close to the gutter on the near side.

After descending and exchanging way-bills, and I had seen him off, I got upon the return coach, which was quite full, and heavily loaded on the top with luggage. I spoke to the horses before I seated myself, or had time to take the reins from the hands of the passenger on the box; the consequence was, the leaders swerved to the near side, the near fore-wheel went into a grating in the channel of the gutter, and the coach, losing her equilibrium, went over, though not before a momentary struggle between the fore and hind part of the coach had broken the perch.

The horses had not moved half-a-dozen paces, and now stood quite still, and the lug-

gage, and luggage-iron, rested against the wall of two adjoining cottages. My box-companion fell on his legs, but the ladies on the roof were shot into one of the cottages, and the inmates being at a wash-tub; that had been placed near the door, one of them, a lady, had a warm reception. Her husband was sitting behind in the dickey; and hearing immediately after the accident a dreadful howling behind, I turned my head after getting hold of the horses, and observed a gentleman lying on his back in the road. I supposed, from the noise he was making, that he had received a fractured limb or serious contusion.

I untied his neck-handkerchief, and asked him where he was hurt. His only reply was the exclamation, "My wife, my wife!"

Presently a lady, dripping with soapsuds, came tripping from behind the coach, and bestowing on him part of the benefits she had received in her fall, assured him of her

safety, as she raised him from the ground.

The scene was sufficiently ludicrous, but fortunately no one had received any injury except myself, and it was a very slight one, having merely grazed my head by its coming in contact with the tiles that overhung the walls of the cottage. We sent to Cambridge for a spare coach, the lady in the meantime changing her dress, when we proceeded safely to London.

CHAPTER IV.

CAMBRIDGE.

Another Change—Town and Gown—Lawyers—A Literary Barrister—Barnwell—Politics and Religion—An Unlucky Blow—A Post Captain and his Wife—An Original Character—A Member of the Cloth—Fifty-two Miles from London — Select Party — Glass of Wine — The Ring — A Sporting Baronet — Strange Customer — Death of a Gladiator — The Double Dandy — Chance Set-to—Merit Rewarded.

PERSEVERANCE in business, and a determination to overcome all obstacles in the way of self-interest or advancement, are, we all know, worthy of general adoption. Whether I was deficient in one, or failed in the other, I cannot say, but perhaps I fell short in both, which

caused me in little less than two years to tire of my continual long drive. In the morning, particularly in the winter, from bed to the box, and in the evening from the box to bed, became too wearing to suit either my inclination or my constitution. I had no time for the employment of the mind, while the hands were thus daily and hourly occupied; and though to all appearance I was revelling in out-door enjoyment, I could but consider myself a prisoner, as I was confined to the same scenery daily, and to the same drudgery, as such continual work made it. I could not escape, even for a day, without the indulgence being embittered with the loss of the profits of the day's work—for with me it was "no longer fiddle, no longer pay."

Independent of this, there was a great inconvenience attending my continuing to drive both coaches; they belonged to two different proprietors in London—the yards

were far apart; consequently I was compelled to live somewhere between them, which involved a very high rental. Then, again, they were neither of them famed for horsing their coaches as they should do beyond the stage out of London—indeed, the work was scarcely done in a decent manner. Complaint after complaint being of no avail, and, feeling that such incessant toil was something akin to the galleys, I resolved to give it up, and try and satisfy my daily wants with my original drag.

I had but to say the word, the alteration was made, and I removed my family to Cambridge.

This formed a new epoch in my history, as for the first time I sat myself down as an inhabitant householder in this important University town. I had now plenty of time, as well as opportunity and inclination, to study the character of the community among whom I had taken up my abode,

and to observe the peculiarities of the distinction so long maintained, and so frequently exhibited, between the Town and the Gown.

But it was some little time before this attracted my attention; my leisure hours were spent partly in gardening—having a good space for that occupation attached to the cottage where I lived—and partly in writing a treatise on the art of driving, with the origin and history of stage-coach travelling, the greater part of which I had prepared for the press, when Government, or some other creditor, putting forward a claim to all the property on the premises of my printer—my manuscript, as well as the proofs of what had been set up, were entirely swept away.

However, I had not long been associated there, before the contrast between the two was made palpable to my understanding—a contrast that seemed almost to constitute an anomaly. That learning should

flourish within the walls of the colleges, while ignorance of the grossest nature should reign without, (a fact that cannot be controverted), raised at once my amazement and my curiosity.

It was natural to suppose that the knowledge and wisdom of which those walls could so justly boast, if they did not impart virtue, would spread their influence far and wide; and that every exhibition of folly and dissipation opposed to morality and religion would be prohibited; but it is not a very uncommon thing to confound causes and effects, as well as to anticipate effects as the natural result of such causes, that are never realised.

The very fact of more than two thousand men, most of them in the heyday of youth, in the glow of health and full flow of animal spirits, assembled at College, albeit to receive instruction and to imbibe wisdom,—involves a considerable expenditure,

and a circulation of coin. And this is sufficient to attract men of another order, who, armed with the allurements of pleasure, are ever ready to pander to the vices of some, the folly of others, and the frailties of all.

But these would be comparatively harmless were it not for a certain class, who, from an inordinate love of gain, provide the extravagant with the means of indulging in prodigality and dissipation. Where the carcase is, there will the crows congregate ; and foremost in the crowd are those of an honourable and useful profession, who, throwing off its ornaments or trammels, that they may the more freely exercise their talents,—find means, by their knowledge of finance, to replenish the empty exchequers of inconsiderate youths, in a generous and disinterested manner known only to themselves. Birds of this feather are found in every town in England ; but I should

judge that none of them can rival Cambridge in the glossy blackness of their plumage, the quick penetration of their evil eye, the keenness of their appetite, or the sharpness of their bills.

But, to leave this metaphor, the undergraduates first get involved without fair means of extricating themselves, and then fly to these harpies for relief, which they administer by anticipating all their dupes may have in reversion, and by easing them of what little they had left of honour, honesty, or good principle. It would be supposed that such practices, publicly known, would consign the enactors to an unenvied distinction; on the contrary, they live and thrive in the midst of a community renowned for its ethics, and have been known to commit with impunity acts which ought to have sent them to the hulks. While, presuming on the rank of gentlemen, which their profession gives

them, without a particle of claim to it, either by birth or early associations, and by relying on a position their superior knowledge of chicanery has procured for them, they exercise their calling with an air of importance that shameless effrontery only could adopt and support, and poverty and ignorance only encourage.

One of these worthies, I remember, superintending the revision of the votes for the borough; and my vote, among others, having been objected to, prompted the barrister who stood by his side—a man of literary celebrity—to ask me if I had ever been at Rome. Surprised at such a question, as foreign to the purpose, and somewhat thrown off my guard, I answered, “No.”

“But you have written about Rome,” said he, “and therefore I conclude you must have been there.”

Seeing by the smirking smile of his ad-

viser that the two were endeavouring to raise a laugh at my expense in consequence of their having been disappointed in their object, which was to disqualify me—"It is true," I said, "I have written of Rome, but it does not follow that I should have been there. You, I believe, have written of *Ten Thousand a-Year*, but it does not necessarily follow that you ever did, or ever will, possess such an income, either from your professional or your literary exertions."

This retort—a thing in which I was by no means an adept—had the desired effect, and put a stop to the impertinent allusions of my querists.

But it would be doing an injustice to the town and to the profession were I to omit due mention of the worthy. There are, no doubt, men of high honour and principle among them—gentlemen in the real sense of that word—who would scorn to descend to the machinations that are productive of

so much evil to many a noble family, such sorrow to parents, and such gross scandal to the University. And the evil does not rest here, but spreads its baneful influence over other orders of this motley community. Besides bill-discounters and money-lenders at exorbitant interest, tailors have been known to provide suit after suit—jewellers, watches and trinkets—wine-merchants, wine and spirits. These have passed untouched into the hands of ready recipients, who have promoted this wasteful expenditure—or, what is worse, they have been given in lieu of money when all other resources failed, to degraded beings, who by the basest means pander to dissolute passions. Others of the class have vied in tempting their victims to excess, while participating in the plunder, thereby stamping a division of the town with ruffianism, immorality, and vice, which the fame of learning and religion cannot qualify.

It is not in the power, perhaps, of the Legislature or the University to obviate this blot upon the reputation of the latter; but the evil must strike every observer, and presents a lamentable instance of the weakness and wickedness of our nature, and the inefficacy of our institutions to remedy a state of things so deplorable.

It is a curious fact, but no less curious than true, that if you ask a particular class of tradesmen—that is, those that have most to do with the University—under-graduates in particular—who are among the best men—he will name those of the most dissolute habits, as they spend the most money; while every worthy member of their own body would select only those who most strictly adhered to the discipline of their respective colleges.

To enter into a dissertation on the long-contested subjects of dispute between Town and Gown, or to advocate the

claims of one or defend the privileges and immunities of the other, does not come within the province of this work. I here need only add to my observations respecting a town in which I resided for many years, that it has exhibited a degree of partizanship in its public bodies scarcely exceeded in any other place since the passing of the Reform Bill.

I, among many, have lived to lament the unhappy division caused in our Church by the propagation of tracts, and the revival of obsolete observances, emanating from the sister University; but I can entertain no apprehensions for the stability of that mode of worship which has obtained for so many years, while it is supported and defended by such clear, practical, common-sense views, as have been advocated by a Whewell, a Sedgwick, or a Philpott—I can see no danger to its established form—that is, free from the Laud-like innovations that would lead us

back to the verge of popery on the one hand, and from the popular extravagances of the conventicle on the other.

I cannot help recording a most remarkable instance of a breach of discipline by an under-graduate—remarkable in the annals of the University for a gross outrage committed on one of its officers. Of this I was a witness, and also beheld the strange yet painful emotions it caused the Parent of the delinquent, whom I had known from my earliest youth—he having lived within a few miles of my father's residence.

It was at Hoddesdon one morning, when changing horses, that a gentleman put his head out from the inside of the coach, his white locks streaming in the wind, and asked me if the box-seat were vacant. As one of my best clients, who frequently occupied that seat thus far — whose name, with that of his family, will always be held in the highest estimation by men of all parties

in the county of Herts* — had just bade me good morning, I replied in the affirmative.

“I should like to sit beside you, Sir,” said he, getting up.

“I shall feel honoured with your company, although not for the first time, I think.”

I knew his fine veteran features, though age, and long service in the Navy, had wrought some few furrows in his weather-beaten cheeks; and, contrary to my usual custom, I told him my name and the place of my former habitation.

“Oh, I know you,” he exclaimed, “and all your family: I ought to do, for I have frequently had you on my knee when you were an infant. Pray, tell me, do you know my son?”

“No, Admiral, I cannot say I do, personally.”

* The sons of the late N. Calvert, Esq., of Hunsdon.

"But you know what has happened?"

"Yes," I replied, "and very sorry I feel for him and his connections."

"You know all about it, then?"

The young gentleman had been expelled the University for knocking down one of the Proctors when in the exercise of his duty.

"Do you know what has become of him, or where he is gone?" he inquired.

"No, I really do not, though the lamentable affair is the general topic of conversation both of Town and Gown."

He then asked me to stop the up-coaches from Cambridge, and enquire if he was among the passengers, which I did—but they had no such person. As we proceeded, he every now and then gave vent to feelings that seemed almost to overpower him. First he would condemn the conduct of his son as most culpable, as unworthy the scion of an ancient family as well as the son of a distinguished naval officer, as

totally subversive of the benefits that awaited him, and as contrary to what he expected and intended when he first sent him to College. Then he would blame himself in no very measured language.

"I have committed a great mistake, Sir," said he to me—"I ought to have made a sailor of him, and a parson of the other"—alluding to his brother; "he is a meek, unassuming youth, that had nothing to say for himself on board ship; while this, Sir, would knock the devil down, let alone a Proctor, if he offended him."

But it would require the pen of a Dickens to describe the ebullitions of anger that escaped him at the misconduct of his son. At one breath he would avow the most implacable vengeance, while with the next he would say he was "a d—— high-spirited fellow." He kept coupling the unhappy error he had committed in the choice of professions for his sons with a conviction of the heinous offence one of

them had been guilty of ; now called down execrations upon him, and then accused his own folly in the most opprobrious terms.

At length, when this painful excitement had exhausted itself, for want, probably, of fresh fuel, he quietly enquired—

“Do you know where I could get a pair of horses like these you are driving?”

I was then sitting behind a first-rate team of my own.

“I understand Cambridge is a good place to purchase a pair?” he added.

I said, “Very likely,” and recommended him to a well-known livery-stable keeper.

As we drove up Trumpington Street, I observed the President of Queen’s College walking quickly towards the “Bull.”

“Here is Dr. King,” I called out : as I pulled up, he silently squeezed my hand. Presently the Doctor took his arm, and walked with him into a private apartment.

I saw no more of him till my following journey down, when I met the Admiral

cheek-by-jowl with his son, on two tall coach horses, apparently on the best of terms with each other and their new purchase.

Among the first persons who made my acquaintance after we had settled ourselves down, was a gentleman who then held the office of chief magistrate of the Borough. He was a Post-captain in the Navy, and is mentioned in the early part of this book as having partaken of mine and my father's hospitality at Portsmouth. He now, in a genuine blunt sailor-like manner, expressed the pleasure he should have in entertaining me in a similar manner. His naval career had been most fortunate throughout. On the unexpected death of Commodore Grant on the Indian station, he succeeded to the command, just at the conclusion of the first Burmese war, and had lately returned laden with the spoils of that hitherto unexplored and idolatrous country.

These had been tastefully disposed, in a

house he had purchased for a permanent residence, by the hands of his lady who had accompanied him from England. The hall was ornamented with canoes, paddles, spears, and other implements of war and commerce. A terrace built in the rear of the house was furnished with carro-nades and flagstaffs, after the manner of Commodore Trunnion; gods and goddesses of all sizes, the larger composed of hardened rice, in imitation of alabaster, richly ornamented, were pedestalled in every room in the house. The smaller and more valuable ones, some of silver and one of gold, did duty as Penates on the mantel-piece of his reception-room.

At this house we were frequent and welcome visitors, and though the lady did now and then ride the high horse, which was not to be wondered at, considering that she herself, as she told us, had ridden upon an elephant in Calcutta, and had been received at the Marquis

of Hastings's table, we always enjoyed the visit.

H. R. H. the Duke of Sussex, introduced by a well-known Fellow of Trinity College,* who was always his confidential friend and companion when at Cambridge, honoured the house with his presence, and inspected the museum; and on the following evening her ladyship—a little elated, I suppose, by the honour conferred on her husband—assumed an air of patronage she probably considered adapted to her company. Such, however, not being in accordance with the tastes of this genuine son of Neptune, he denounced in no very measured terms.

“I am ashamed of you, Captain Coe,” said the lady, in retort, with an air of studied importance; “you would not have behaved so yesterday when George Adam Brown and the Duke of Sussex were here.”

* The late Rev. George Adam Brown.

"D——n George Adam Brown," cried the old tar. "I had rather see my old friend and his wife here than all the Fellows of Trinity together."

A fit of hysterics followed this burst of ill-timed indignation, and it for a short time interrupted the pleasure of the evening. The Captain was determined not to give way to such "d——d nonsense," as he, in not the most polite terms, described it; and the lady, after the application of the usual remedies, took her place at the supper-table.

Closely connected with this family, but seldom a visitor at the house, was a character as genuine as his brother-in-law for standing out in prominent relief from the crowd of others of the community, as original and unique. Prolific as the imagination of our great bard was in exhibiting human nature in all its varied phases, and clear and comprehensive as was his understanding of her manifold vagaries,

I doubt if ever he even met with so strange a character.

Peculiar in his dress, which he never altered to suit the fashion of the day; quaint in his manners, and simple in his habits, he attracted such notice only from the passer-by as a bird of a different plumage from its fellows. To those who knew him there was something more under that broad brim than a first acquaintance would perceive—something more humorous in that countenance that a high snow-white shirt collar like a sheet of note-paper, more than partially hid—than the casual observer would expect. The long black waistcoat that came over his hips—covered with a cut-off coat, into the outside pockets of which his hands were usually thrust—enveloped a heart which beat in unison with the best feelings of our nature; in addition were well-polished top-boots, which supported a figure singular for its oddity and inelegance.

Possessed of an easy independence, and a contented mind, his loftiest aspirations seemed to be directed to becoming familiar with the fraternity to which I belonged; and his principal pleasure was derived from acting in the same capacity at Cambridge as Bishop Atterbury, as I have elsewhere termed him, did at Oxford, though not from the same motives. This gave him an opportunity of selecting and appointing the men to drive for the particular establishment which he ostensibly owned or superintended; and in doing so, one of his invariable conditions was, that they should confine their nether limbs to knee breeches and top-boots. This did not prevent him from mixing with them in public company, into which his convivial disposition would often lead him; and while avoiding anything approaching to business in his conversation, he would display his satirical humour in good-naturedly exposing some of their peculiar foibles.

But it was at his own house and at his own table that this extraordinary and eccentric being should have been seen, for his character to have been properly appreciated. To this his sanctum—for his home was seldom invaded—I, with one other only of the fraternity, with our wives, were admitted or invited. There everything was disposed in the neatest order, and everything provided in the most simple, at the same time elegant and hospitable manner. Though a bachelor, there was no absence of politeness or want of attention to females, however his outward appearance contrasted with that of his more accomplished sister, who boasted of having sat upon gold embroidered ottomans, and fancied herself a Begum.

Joy beamed from his laughing eye, as his knife entered the smoking and well-commended joint; a heartfelt gratification lent an additional glow to his smiling face, as he looked round and severally helped his wel-

come and favoured guests ; while the raciness of his conversation, interlarded with apt quotations from some of the most humorous characters depicted by our immortal bard, would excite the risible muscles of my brother whip as well as myself—for he had an intellectual capacity, and a classic taste for the enjoyment of such things. Without indulging in any excess, such treats, not to be witnessed elsewhere in the town, would keep us to a very late hour.

I cannot give the reader a better idea of the estimation in which I held this singular character, than by transcribing a little effusion I attached to his obituary, in a paper whose columns were always open to my pen. After recapitulating his oddities, "Farewell, Sam,"* I wrote—"many an hour—not unintellectual—not to be regretted—not to be forgotten—have we spent together ; and as the tear with which Sterne's recording angel blotted

* Samuel Wheeler.

out a good man's breach of the divine law, —so may the unhallowed, but heart-born effusion that follows this pen aid in blotting out all your frailties ; and may the merits of a redeeming Saviour pass your spirit into the abode of the blessed."

Besides the person I have named as my companion at these pleasant re-unions, there was one whose antecedents and whose domestic circle recommended a reciprocity of visits,* as well as others in the profession with whom I frequently came in contact, whose attainments would not have disgraced higher or more intellectual callings.

One was fond of the histrionic art, and, as an amateur, made frequent and respectable displays of his abilities, in Shakspeare's, and Bulwer's and Knowles's more modern characters.† Another—who had been educated at the Charterhouse, and was closely allied to a celebrated and titled

* Mr. Joseph Fawcett, of the "Cambridge Times."

† Mr. James Reynolds, of the "Cambridge Telegraph."

author^{ess}—early showed a desire to join the craft, by taking every opportunity in his out-of-school hours, of driving hackney coaches. As he grew up, he has been known, instead of accompanying his Mother, who kept the first society, to a party, to change clothes with the coachman, and take greater delight in performing his functions, than in any company to which his family connections enabled him to gain access.*

Tom was a tall, handsome fellow, with rather fascinating manners, and was as remarkable for the redundancy of his wit and the keenness of his satire, as he was in the number of his admirers among the undergraduates and the tradesmen.

Among the latter was a hatter, who sought every opportunity of making his society agreeable by continual applications of brandy and water and cigars.

This commenced an intimacy that induced Tom one morning, in going into his

* Mr. Thomas Morgan, of the Wisbeach drag.

shop, to take up a *tile*, as he termed it, and put it on his head. His friend, rather pleased with such a customer, thought nothing of the payment; neither did Tom, whose habits of forgetfulness in that way were too deeply rooted to be eradicated before a new *roof* was required. Time went on, and it was supplied again and again, and all thoughts of the cost seemed to be drowned in the ever-flowing stream of brandy and water, or lost in the sweet perfume of the India weed; till one morning Tom was disturbed at his toilet by a boy knocking at his door, with a note, and telling him he was not to return without an answer.

He immediately recognized in the messenger the shop-boy of his friend, the hatter. He quickly opened the note and read thus :—

“DEAR TOM,—I enclose your little account, and I think it is high time it was settled.”

Addressing the boy, he said:—

“You are not to go without an answer?”

“No, sir.”

“Stop one minute and you shall have one.”

Sitting down at the instant he wrote:—

“DEAR JACK,—May the difference of opinion never alter friendship!”

I think the great Sheridan never eclipsed this prompt and apt repartee.

But this was not the only member of the profession who attracted the notice of either Town or Gown; for if we may judge from the manner in which their society was courted, they must have been regarded as a favoured class. Indeed, some one thought us worthy the distinguished honour of being named individually, in a little production of one of the Colleges, entitled “Fifty-two Miles from London,” that appeared in a well-known weekly Sporting paper. In this the habits of each particular dragsman, as

we were termed, were distinctly, if not correctly given, and with some of us—not willing to think our avocation entitled us to such ludicrous exposure—this was not very kindly received.

I, among a few others, thinking a liberty had been taken with my name, felt rather indignant; and knowing pretty well who were the authors of this attack upon what we thought our dignity, took up my pen in reply, and occupied a column of the Cambridge paper for four or five consecutive publications.

My name not appearing, the articles engrossed the attention and excited the curiosity of many who had long been familiar with the objects of this pointed but not very elegant satire; and I had the secret pleasure of witnessing the laughable remarks my idle hours had called forth. My friend Samuel, who had a keen relish for the humorous, was above all others in evincing the ec-

static delight the perusal of so unexpected a production gave him.

Unlike my brethren, I did not seek or care for the society of the under-graduates ; but we are not always master of our actions, and I was drawn in, by what means I do not now remember, unless it was the love of driving that urged one or two of them to elect me a member of a small circle, who *par excellence* styled themselves the "Select Vestry." The first and only rule of this little club was—for I never heard any other discussed—to meet every Saturday afternoon at Uncle Barefoot's, as they termed the host of a small but respectable Hotel in the town—to partake of a dinner, cooked in first-rate style, to which I was to contribute the fish, as my portion of the expense, which I invariably did, fresh from Billingsgate that morning. The wine was of the best quality, which Uncle was always careful to bring up in flannel from the cellar, with a Bacchanalian smile upon his

sporting old visage, and a joyful twinkle in his eye, knowing that he was about to partake of it.

Though much their senior in age, I cannot say but that I delighted very much in the society of these young men; for, while enlivened by mirth and wit, their conversation and demeanour was always such as became gentlemen, and I never witnessed any tendency to excess. One of them in particular, I remember, the nephew of an Earl well known for his great popularity, and the high respect universally entertained for him,* possessed a vein of drollery in his conversation and manner that would sometimes keep us in a roar of laughter.

Dining once with this gentleman in his rooms at Christ's College, when others of his acquaintance had assembled, I was much surprised at an exploit that I never before saw equalled. The cloth being re-

* The late Earl Fitzwilliam.

moved, the dessert was brought in on a tray, by a respectable-looking, elderly man, who, after depositing dish after dish with great precision as to their relative positions, was about to retire, when my friend, then sitting at the head of the table, having glanced at me to attract my attention, said to him—

“Barnes, will you take a glass of wine?”

“Thank you, Sir,” replied the man, in a most respectful manner.

“Get yourself a glass, Barnes.”

Taking one off the sideboard, he put it next the decanter. This was immediately exchanged by the president for a large soda-water glass, into which he emptied the bottle of port.

“Good health to you, gentlemen,” said the man, and taking up the glass, disposed of its contents without taking it from his lips. Replacing the empty vessel on the table, and giving evident signs of satisfaction, he made his bow and was going.

"Stop, Barnes," cried my friend—"wet the other eye."

Then, emptying another full bottle that stood beside him, Barnes disposed of that in the same summary manner, and according another bow to the company, made his way to the door with as firm a step and, apparently, as clear a head as he had entered.

With these gentleman I continued my intimacy until the termination of their University career, when they dispersed. Returning to their different parental abodes, the majority became beneficed clergymen; and it has been very gratifying to me to hear of their social advancement, and of their usefulness in the ministry. There was one, in particular, whose witty conversation and classic attainments both amused and enlightened me, from a knowledge of whose kind disposition, affable manners, and good sound understanding, I ventured to predict a brilliant career, and was not disappointed.

Another, who did not go into the Church, succeeded in due time to the estates of his father, in one of the most beautiful localities of the North Riding. Following his favourite pursuits, he now possesses one of the largest racing studs in the county of York, and, though not so fortunate, perhaps, as some, he has displayed a knowledge and judgment in breeding, rearing, and training horses, that has done no discredit to his Alma Mater; while the example he sets to his neighbours as a practical agriculturist, the lessons he has taught them, and the liberal but unostentatious manner in which he dispenses the hospitalities of Easby Abbey will ever rank him as a first-rate English gentleman.

But this little coterie did not include all my University friends; for, some time after, I was honoured with the acquaintance of a noble lord who has since distinguished himself both in the senate and in the literary world. His lordship was very fond of

driving, and I had frequently the honour of his company on the box; but what rendered his under-graduateship more remarkable was his having gained the Chancellor's medal, and driven four horses into the most difficult gateway in Cambridge—two very opposite, and, it has been thought, almost irreconcilable achievements. But it was this duality of purpose, or, perhaps, similarity of pursuits, that first drew his lordship's attention towards me; for I had written, not *for* the Chancellor's medal, as will hereafter be seen, but for my own pride and pleasure, and ever after found his lordship a kind and liberal patron.

In reverting more immediately to the box, it was about this portion of my career that I met with a circumstance which made a painful impression on my mind. In my earlier days I had, like other young men, taken a liking to one of the fashionable sports of the day—that is, I had the merits and exploits of

Gully and Gregson—Jem Belcher and the Chicken—Tom Belcher and Dutch Sam—ever on my lips. Indeed, I had ventured to take lessons of the latter in the noble art of self-defence, as it was then called, which, upon one or two occasions, I must confess stood me in good service. But, while I admired the science I abhorred the association, so that my knowledge of the men or of their profession was very limited.

My attention was often recalled to the feats of the ring by the public papers, and by their being a frequent topic of conversation on the coach as well as in most public companies.

The stables where my horses stood were situated on a point of the road, near to which the three counties of Essex, Hertford, and Cambridge joined; and, at the distance of a mile, in a newly-erected, modest mansion, on a pretty spot commanding an extensive view over the surrounding

country, looking down upon it as upon a carpet, lived a Baronet who was known to be a patron of pugilism, and to possess a thorough knowledge of the science as well as of its professors. Consequently, the spot was frequently chosen as the scene where trials of science and bottom were decided.

It was on a morning preceding the day on which a long-expected battle was to come off, that I was directed by my way-bill to take up three persons at the "Cherry Tree," Kingsland Road. I had three other insides, one a young and beautiful lady, whose husband, a clergyman, was my companion on the box. Before I got to the Stone's end, a gentleman on the roof said, "You have got some fighting men going down with you."

"Have I?" I replied, carelessly; but the gentleman on the box, pricking up his ears, said he would not allow any such characters to sit in the coach with his wife.

Pulling up, for my three customers were waiting, and, while telling my box companion that I had no power to exclude any one on account of his profession from the coach who had taken his seat, his mind was set at rest by two coarse-looking fellows, in rough greatcoats, getting on the outside, and a well-dressed, genteel-looking young man getting in. In this way we travelled to our place of refreshment, the husband looking in when we changed horses to see that all was right.

On his assisting her out (they had not been long married) she asked him who was the gentleman who got in last, for his conversation had been extremely interesting, and she was sure, by his general information, he must be a gentleman of distinction at the University.

The individual referred to entered the luncheon room alone, dressed in an elegant suit of black, sat down at the table, and displayed on his delicate white hand

a ring, in which was set a valuable diamond. His manners corresponded with his appearance, and no one could have suspected him of being a fighting man.

Reader, this was a man known as Brighton Bill—his real name I never knew—but that he was of respectable parents, and intended by them for a better calling, I was convinced. When two days afterwards I saw his contused and distorted countenance, the only part visible from under the bedclothes at the “Wheat-sheaf” at Backway, when he was deserted by all, and had no friend or relative near to watch over his fast-departing spirit, I could not restrain a tear. The spectacle thrilling my inward parts with horror, I silently, as I descended the stairs, invoked a curse on such barbarous practices, as well as on the authors of his death. He expired before my return the next day; and on my arrival in town, I was met by an editor, who generally re-

ported in full these disgusting exhibitions, whom I had long known. In answer to his inquiries, I told him the man was dead. "Then," cried he, turning to go away, "they must toddle,"—meaning that his murderers must leave the country. This was all the solicitude expressed by this organ of the fancy, as it was termed, for one who, from a desire to become a distinguished member of it, had fallen a victim to the most brutal practice that ever disgraced a civilized community.

At the inquest held on the body, the jury were unanimous in wishing to return a verdict of wilful murder against his antagonist and second, as well to punish the offenders as to testify their horror of the event; but as the coroner told them such a verdict would only subvert the means of punishment, manslaughter was substituted. After a considerable time had elapsed, and the exasperated feeling of the public had somewhat subsided, the culprits surrendered to

their trial at Hertford, and received the usual sentence for the offence they had committed—two years imprisonment: a sentence far short of the deserts of the principal and savage perpetrator.

However lamentable it may be to see a young man of intellect and good breeding—for he was both—thus associating with men of brutal passions and depraved habits, imitating, unknowingly as it were—some of the worst of the Roman Emperors, in assuming the garb and entering the arena of the gladiator, yet, for the honour of my country, I hope he was a solitary instance. Yet I remember a gentleman who used to travel with me when I drove the Cheltenham coach, and from his great bulk and his love of dress, was called “the double dandy,” offering to fight any man in England; but with this proviso, that his opponent should be a gentleman. I named this circumstance shortly after to my friend the wine merchant I have before spoken of, who, though then in

the meridian of life, full of health and of activity and vigour, intimated to me that he should like to accept the challenge, although an old 'un.

It so happened that, two or three weeks after, these two met together on my coach—the double dandy on the box, my friend sitting behind me. We had not proceeded far off the stones before I told my companion, after ascertaining that he was still in the same mind, that I had got a customer for him. He smiled and asked who he was.

“Look behind you,” I replied.

He did so, and eyeing my friend, observed to him—

“You are a little in the fancy, I understand?”

“Yes,” he replied; “and you are the gentleman, I presume, with whom and myself our friend here,” pressing his hand on my shoulder, “has made a match.”

"The same. Are you going to Cheltenham?"

"Yes."

"Then we will talk further about it."

The result of this was, a fair stand-up set-to with the gloves, in which my friend came off victorious.

I have recorded this occurrence merely to demonstrate that science and manhood can be displayed without having recourse to the prize-ring, and without that resort to the modern tactics, of first hugging your adversary, then throwing him, and last thrusting your knees into his body—a system of fighting that never would have been allowed by our fathers, and has been sanctioned only for the better effecting of crosses, thereby making it a profession fit only for ruffians. I have both witnessed and experienced practical illustrations of the benefits to be derived from a knowledge of this useful art, and would glory in

its display as one of our national characteristics, when practised on an emergency and in self-defence, as far more indicative of what becomes a man, than the steel of the Italian, or the extravagant demonstrations of vengeance in vogue with our American brethren.

A particular instance I remember in illustration of this idea.

Riding one day with my friend before named in his phaeton,* in going round the churchyard at Ewel, a very dangerous part of the road to Epsom, which has since been judiciously altered, we came in contact with a brewer's waggon. In consequence we were grossly insulted by the driver, who threatened to lay his whip about us, making use of the most abusive language; and on expostulating with him, he challenged to fight either one or both of us. My friend, first casting an eye on him, gave me

* The late John Morris, of Northumberland Street, Strand.

the reins, and taking off his coat, jumped out of the vehicle and went up to the fellow.

My friend was a fine tall athletic man, as I have elsewhere said, and fit, in a military point of view, to be the right-hand man of ten thousand; but the waggoner overtopped him by an inch or more, and was stout in proportion. As he pulled his smock frock over his head, and they put themselves in attitude, I could not help applying, or perhaps misapplying, the words of the Mantuan bard—“*Fortemque Gyam fortemque Cloanthum.*” It did not take me long to be satisfied that my friend had far the best of it in science, distinctly visible by the not very gentle taps he repeatedly administered to the astonished index of his opponent’s countenance. His choler rising with such unpleasant admonitions, he doubled himself up, and with his head down, to avoid, as he thought, any more of such unwelcome communications to his visual or nasal organs, went at his adversary with the

force and rage of a bull. My friend, meeting him as he was coming in, gave him a chuck under the chin with his left hand that sent his head up, and the sound of the vibration of his jaws was instantaneous, with a blow from the shoulder with his right, that, like the kick of a horse, caused him, like Eryx of old, to measure his length on the green sward, where he lay bleeding and gasping with rage. Finding that the man was unwilling or unable to renew the combat, my friend, after assuring himself that he was not more than deservedly punished for his gross misconduct, and that, too, in a way he had himself invited, advised him to be more careful in future who he insulted, quietly retired to his vehicle, and having put on his coat, with a smile of triumph, we continued our pleasurable excursion.

The Baronet before referred to,* who was the holder of two Baronetcies, and had as

* Sir Peter Soame.

many names as would serve to designate a moderate family, was a very odd man, and could justly boast not a little of his personal prowess. Upon one occasion, I remember, when a great multitude had assembled to witness a pugilistic encounter, that was to be decided near his place, and with his special approval, or rather by his invitation, by some means or other it did not come off. This so irritated the Baronet that he jumped into the ring, that had been formed for two very noted men of that day, and said that, rather than the company should be disappointed, he and his gamekeeper would fight any two of the best men among them. This not being accepted—for the appearance of the two was such as must have caused a very bold prize-fighter to consider what he was about in venturing to attack them—he challenged any two men in England.

But one of the most singular feats of this most singular character took place at

his own house. He was seated at the head of his table one evening, when I was an invited guest, entertaining a large company of both sexes—which he well understood, despite his less polite accomplishments—when the footman entered, and, leaning over the back of his chair, engaged his attention a few minutes.

“Oh—very well,” said he, aloud; and, on the servant’s withdrawing, begged permission of his guests to be absent a short time on very urgent business. He beckoned me to accompany him, and we went directly to the kitchen, where we found seated a stalwart butcher of one of the neighbouring villages, who acted also in the capacity of constable to the hundred.

“Do you want me?” he asked, addressing the man by name.

“Yes, Sir Peter.”

“What do you want?”

“I want 6s. 6d. for the summons I have called so many times about.”

"And my servant tells me you won't go out of the house without it—is it so?"

"No, I won't, Sir Peter."

Then, taking some silver out of his waist-coat pocket, and counting out the stipulated sum, he put it on the dresser.

"Now, they call you the Fighting Butcher, do they not?" enquired the Baronet; and, upon the man's answering in the affirmative, added—"Then take off your coat, and if you are a better man than me you shall have it—not without."

The butcher, nothing loth, did as he was told.

"Get you girls out of the kitchen?" said their master. "Where's Stephen?"

Stephen, who was his *fides Achates* as well as his gamekeeper, and was always in attendance, the first thing at morning and the last thing at night, answered for himself.

"Put the chairs and tables out of the way, and go down in the cellar and get

some sawdust, and then come and see that Mumford has fair play. Mr. C. will take care of me."

"Yes, Stephen," replied the butcher, "and then see me give your master a lesson. I'll serve him out."

Stephen put on one of his arch grins; he presently returned with the sawdust, which having strewed, he retired to a corner.

The Baronet leisurely took off his coat and waistcoat; which having carefully deposited, he divested himself of his cravat, &c. He advanced to meet his antagonist, who stood with his arms up, ready to receive him; but a ferocious glance of his dark eye seemed to confound or disarm the butcher, who received a blow right through his guard that laid him prostrate. Stephen picked him up. In the next minute, but little daunted, he endeavoured to close with the Baronet, who exhibited first-rate strength and science in keeping him at a distance, parrying his blows with his left,

and knocking him clean off his legs with his right, till, after six tremendous falls, this terror of the surrounding villages, picking up his clothes, departed.

Stephen asked him, as he went out, when he was coming to give his master another lesson; while the Baronet, after a copious ablution, re-adjusted his dress, and rejoined his company, who were not at all aware of the nature of the very urgent business that had called for their host's temporary absence.

I met the butcher a day or two after, who, with his head tied up, gave unequivocal marks of his handsome reception at Haydon Grange.

CHAPTER V.

NORFOLK.

An Old English Gentleman—Liberal Patron—Good Workman — Gift Horse — Mr. Rarey—Epsom Downs—Finished Gentleman—A Week's Holiday—Stag Hounds — A Somersault: Pleasing Result—Mournful Cavalcade — Strange Talk — Ludicrous Incident—Turn-up between Two Dogs — Collision—A New Feature—The Chancellor's Medal—Novel Title—A Pleasant Reception — Contrast — A Field Marshal—Vain Attempt — Another Avocation.

AMONG the numerous gentry who owned or occupied seats in this, the Western part of the county, was a person whom my partner, in the exuberance of his gratitude and respect, styled the King of Norfolk; and a stranger would have thought the title not ill-applied

when he witnessed the esteem he was held in by all classes.

He had in early life been at the University of Oxford, and was one of the founders of a society or club that was of much advantage to the fraternity, providing for them when laid up by accident, sickness, or old age. This alone would entitle him to the praise and good word of all right-thinking professors; while those who came more immediately under his ken, and felt the genial warmth of his kind and generous nature, could not fail to be imbued with a feeling of thankfulness for their lot having been cast on a road that led to his hospitable home.

When I first made my appearance on that stage, which I have attempted to give the reader an account of in the last few chapters, it was his custom to drive to and from London. He was an amateur and a most excellent workman, always keeping a relay of horses on the road, for the pur-

pose of practising and indulging in an art that he very much admired.

I first saw him in his drag when he pulled up and spoke to my friend Bob at Cambridge. I knew him from his likeness to his brother in Hampshire, but did not put myself forward. As he drove off I was told by my brother whip, with some self-importance, who the gentleman was. He concluded with, "You'll see, boy, he's the best friend we've got;" and to me, for many years, did he verify Bob's prediction.

For reasons I have before stated, a year or more elapsed before I made his acquaintance; and it was not till after the alterations and improvements which were made in our drag that I had the pleasure of his company on the box; and it was my good fortune soon to grow in his favour. Whether it was that I came from Hampshire, and had frequently hunted with the celebrated pack of which his Brother was

Master, or that he respected my former position, I cannot say, but he uniformly treated me with a frank and familiar kindness, that was as far removed from aristocratic pride as it was from assumed condescension or affected patronage.

He was possessed of a great flow of animal spirits, but there was something more in his hearty laugh when he first addressed you than would strike a common observer; and there was a sincerity in his "good-bye," too, that told you plainly, with him it was not "out of sight out of mind." Living in the midst of a shooting country, owning and hiring manors to a considerable extent, rearing and preserving game in greater quantities than any nobleman or gentleman in the county, his house was always full of company in the shooting season, and their coming and going tended as much to the support of the coach as to my own individual advantage. Indeed, from their conversation I learnt that my name was

frequently in their host's mouth, and that to him I was indebted for the notice and patronage I received from many of his neighbours and visitors. Latterly, his family growing up, he generally travelled post with the ladies; while his eldest son—a fine specimen of his race—stuck to the box, and I had much pleasure in imparting to him a few rules that, perhaps, assisted in making him a perfect master of that art in which he as much delighted as he excelled all others in the three necessary ingredients—judgment, skill, and execution.

There was a neighbouring Squire who was as fond of driving four horses as himself, but, like most amateurs, he was far too fond of the whip, which he would exercise with much skill, but little mercy; consequently, his judgment was often at fault, and on one or two occasions he gave serious proofs of his lamentable deficiency in the first qualification necessary to make an adept in driving. The other rode with

me more frequently; and one day, when his father accompanied him, and the son had hold of the reins, they very much admired a leader I had in my own team. The senior said,—

“Don’t you think, Harry, our Johnny” (the name of one of his hunters) “would make a good match for this near leader?”

“Match him well,” replied the son, “for colour, size, and action.”

“Suppose we give him to Tom”—for so he familiarly designated me—“the season’s over, you know, Harry, boy.”

“He won’t go in harness,” replied the other.

Catching at this, and not willing to let so good an offer go by, I said—

“Let me try. I never knew a horse I could not make go, if not a kicker.”

“I’ll send him.”

He was sent the following day. I looked at him, and thought him a very likely animal; but I knew his fault, and called to

mind my feat at Oxford. Here, however, was no canal. There was a stable at a lone house, and not even a break to try him in nearer than Cambridge. I do not pretend to have the acumen or experience of Mr. Rarey, whose abilities I should like to have seen tested upon a variety of tempers that have come under my own supervision; but I concluded this animal had been tried in the usual way, and that nothing could be made of him. I thought that when this horse should be put beside the one he intended to match, as off-leader, he would be free from the confinement of the pole and pole-chain, and finding himself at liberty, and seeing nothing before him but the road, that he would suffer himself to be led off by the other, and gradually take up his work.

But I was mistaken. I had no sooner got on the box and spoken to the team, than he turned himself round, with his head over the other horse's loins, then reared on his hind legs as if he were going over

his partner, then plunged, then came back on the bars with his hocks, then fought with his forefeet, shaking his head, and playing all sorts of tricks except kicking. It was fortunate I had a gentleman on the box who knew something about horses, and had confidence in my judgment. Presently the animal set his forefeet out, fixed his jaws, put his ears back, and remained motionless, saying as plainly as such actions will speak, "I won't go."

"What do you mean to do now, Mr. —?" said my companion.

The horse-keeper was about to hit him with a stick out of the hedge.

"Let him alone," cried I.

With my wheel-horses both well poled and curbed up, so that I had full command of the coach as well as of them and the near leader, a powerful and very quick horse, I sat patiently, with my eyes fixed on my new acquaintance. He remained in the position I have described some two or

three minutes ; then I observed a motion in the skin of his neck like a slight relaxation of the muscles ; his ears first almost imperceptibly moved, then nervously pricked forward. Suddenly, with one bound he went off ; the other horse was with him instantly, and keeping the wheel-horses up, we went a merry pace for the first mile, when we gradually dropped into a fair trot till we reached the "Wheat Sheaf," at Barkway, where we pulled up. It being up-hill nearly all the way, there was no danger of his getting the better of me. Here we stopped two or three minutes, and at starting he would have played the same trick again, but, after two or three antics, he suffered the other horse to lead him off.

I continued daily to drive him, and he would frequently show his restive temper ; but there was no other way than to watch and wait for him. Once I had occasion to turn back and exchange with the man who

drove the "Telegraph,"* when he, thinking he could make him go by whipping the wheel horses, and driving the bars on to him, only proved the better effects of patience and mild treatment, for he could not succeed, and the horse was obliged to be taken out and another substituted. In my passage through life I have found that this mode of treatment will equally apply to another species, whose mouths are not confined by bit and bridle, but who are sometimes similar in temper, and almost as destitute of understanding.

This little triumph served further to ingratiate me with both father and son; and from this time, if anything occurred in the field—such as a horse breaking his knees, getting staked, or what not—it was said, "Never mind—send him to Cross; he will know what to do with him."

In the meantime, I was honoured with the continued intimacy of the son, who

* George Elliott.

invariably took occasion to offer me a seat on his drag to Epsom on the Derby-day, when his turn-out was more in order or more admired than any other of a similar description. He would introduce me to many titled companions, and would always put me on an equal footing with them; but had I ever been so inclined to take advantage of the light in which he held me, I never could come up to the bland and polite familiarity of a noted frequenter of the turf, whose dress and appearance were more odd than attractive. His ostensible avocation seemed to be that of a dealer in cards; in ignorance of his proper name I must call him Jerry. This well-known character, who might be seen at the end of the day laying his length on a waggon in a state of utter forgetfulness, apparently watched our arrival; on our pulling up on the crowded downs he would advance towards us with an air of affected good breeding; and, addressing one noble lord, would say,

"Ah, G——, how are you?" To another, "Alfred, my dear boy, how do you do?"

To such kind inquiries answers were returned that implied pleasure rather than anger at the recognition, or at the fellow's display of fraternity; for generally all distinctions were drowned in a glass of sherry, or some more choice beverage, proffered by my friend the Squire, with a hearty laugh at Jerry's *nonchalance*.

In the hunting-season I was now and then sent for—I will not say invited—to the hospitable mansion of the father; and was always sure of a mount, when the dream of former days would come back on me with vivid recollection. On one occasion I was to stop a week, as there were to be some grand festivities. Accordingly, finding a deputy, in which I had no difficulty, I went down on the Monday, and a young farmer, whom I knew, took me to his house in the same village, where I slept. In the morning the carriage, with

the servant and groom, came to take me to the hall, about a mile distant, to breakfast. I was received with one of the old Squire's hearty laughs, and as hearty a shake of the hand.

"Sit you down—sit you down," he was sure to exclaim.

I did so, and he rang the bell for a hot beefsteak to be brought in. While in the act of uncovering my plate to make ready, I saw a cheque for ten pounds upon it. I turned round, and looked at him with an expression of silent gratitude.

"Put it in your pocket," said he. "You can't afford to stop off your coach for nothing, I am sure ; so, say not a word."

I did as I was directed, and sincerely thanked him for his considerate kindness. I turned to discuss the beefsteak, which I did with an excellent appetite, washing it down with a good supply of Truman-Hanbury, as neither tea nor coffee ever formed part of my morning's repast.

"A stag is to be turned off at eleven, and you are to ride old Miser—is he not, Harry?" he inquired, addressing the son, who just then came in.

"Oh, yes—he's all ready; but you must come with me," said the junior, taking my arm, "and I'll furnish you with whip, spurs, &c."

All arrangements having been completed, and a glass or two of sherry drank standing, I mounted; then, with the son as Master of the hounds, and a numerous company, I rode to the field where the deer was to be uncartered. The old gentleman driving in his carriage, accompanied by the ladies, to witness the throw-off.

After a little time the hounds were put on, and the scent being good—that is, breast-high—they went off at the top of their speed. I kept close to the young Squire, when, presently, coming to a high fence, I went side by side over it with him, and at the same time, whether in

lifting his hind-quarters too high, as some horses will do in clearing a live fence, or whether the potent liquors I had imbibed had an effect on my equilibrium, I went over Miser's head, and the old Squire's ringing laugh at my mishap was heard above all the others, though he was on the other side of the field in the road.

Not in the least hurt, I soon regained my saddle, and after a long run, with only one check—the deer laying down in a brook—I contrived to be in when he was taken. After a prolonged ride home—more than twenty miles—with the huntsman and two others, the day's sport wound up, as such days usually do, with an excellent dinner, when social hilarity was continued to a late hour, my somersault provoking general mirth whenever referred to.

The two following days were spent in the exhibition of a sport that is fast fading away, one which I have touched upon in the early part of this book as peculiar

to this country. Men of all ranks attended, good-fellowship reigned, hospitality abounded, and altogether it was a good picture of merry old England. Another day with the hounds, in which I was more fortunate, terminated my visit, and I returned home pleased and gratified beyond measure with the mark of distinction that had been bestowed on me by my kind entertainer.

If I were to record all the good acts of this benevolent man I should very soon fill a volume; suffice it to say, they ceased only with his life; and ever since I attended the mournful cavalcade that bore him to his last resting-place in his own parish church, my mind has been impressed with the true type of an old English gentleman, and I have sought in vain for his parallel. If ever these lines should meet the eye of his son, they will recall the old Lynn, and the many pleasurable hours we have spent together upon it.

LINES WRITTEN ON WITNESSING THE FUNERAL OF THE
LATE H. VILLEBOIS, ESQ., OF MARHAM HOUSE,
NORFOLK.

And is he gone, the good old Squire?
The like of him how few !
Who is there that would not admire
A specimen so true—
A specimen of English heart
With Christian virtues crown'd,
Rejoicing always to impart
Its happiness around ?

Not fam'd was he for deeds of arms,
With pow'rs forensic bless'd ;
But where's the heart that living warms
A kinder, nobler breast ?

The poor man's friend, th' oppressor's bane,
This earth he proudly trod :
In him was seen what poets feign,
The noblest work of God.

Oh ! could my feeble pen arrest
The passing funeral bell,
How many would this truth attest,
And of his goodness tell !

Weep on, weep on ! nor vainly try
To staunch the gushing tear ;
For, while his spirit soars on high,
Your grief shall deck his bier.

Thus, then, did my days pass pleasantly
away, my family increasing with my years.
My father's utter ruin having been accom-
plished, the most distant hope of ever regain-

ing my former position, or even of advancing from my present, was entirely precluded. Nevertheless, neither envy nor despair entered into my composition; and the kind feeling and urbanity of manner of the majority of those with whose company I was honoured, reconciled me to my fate. Almost daily some occurrence would take place, or some conversation would arise, that not only excited my curiosity, and sometimes interested me, but would call forth my surprise. It exhibited our nature in all its phases, and furnished examples of cupidity in quarters I, in my simplicity, should never have dreamt of, but which, if I were to repeat, would only cause my veracity to be doubted. I mention this only as a proof of what I stated in the early part of this book—that the sitting behind four good horses, and the being permitted to hold the reins, often induced a conversation of more than ordinary interest and importance.

But there was confidence reposed in me of a more pleasing nature, that was much better adapted to my position—that of now and then being entrusted with the charge of ladies of rank. This was gratifying to my pride, as well as advantageous to my pocket.

Here I cannot help recording a ludicrous scene that was exhibited at Cambridge, on the occasion of my having two ladies, the daughters of a noble viscount in Surrey, of which county he was lord-lieutenant. They were going on a visit to a relative near Lynn, and of them I had especial charge. A dinner had been ordered in a private apartment, and I was to present them to the landlady, who stood on the steps to receive them; but an untoward accident prevented this. The horsekeeper at Cambridge was one of those independent sort of men of the lower class, who well understood his work and did it. Like some of his fellows, he was aware of this; always

walking with his head up, his cap set jauntily on one side, and a flower between his lips, like people of better quality. Another appurtenance he had, too, which some men of all ranks prize, and women as well, a favourite dog. It was his custom, and his duty, to be at the Inn a few minutes before the coach arrived; and he would sit on the stone against the gateway, with a pretty little bull-terrier, he valued at two guineas, between his knees. On my pulling up, he would first unhook the leaders' traces, draw the reins, then detach the wheel horses, and take them down the street to the stable. My brother dragsman had a dog also. His was a spaniel of a very choice breed, that would sometimes follow his master to the coach; and on its starting, return home. I passed this coachman that day just before I got to the Inn. He had his white gloves on and his dog with him. On my stopping, he went, as was his custom, to the hind

boot, to sort his parcels. The mistress of the house stepped to the coach door, to assist the ladies out, necessarily one foot in advance of the other. I threw the reins down, and was in the act of dismounting, when the *varmint* horsekeeper's pet, catching sight of Bob's spaniel, flew in a moment right between the hostess's feet, one of which was on the step of the coach, knocked her down, and fastened on the unoffending quadruped.

Bob dropped his parcels to relieve his dog from the silent fix in which the bull-terrier had got him; and Mr. Horsekeeper left his horses with three of the four leaders' traces unhooked, and the near rein thrown on the ground, to try and make his pet desist from his unprovoked attack. But this was a thing not so easily accomplished—his lips were fixed in too strong an embrace to be readily separated. In vain did Bob grasp the two hind legs of his favourite, with his

snow-white gloves, like a wheelbarrow ; in vain did the horsekeeper go down on his knees and importune his canine friend, by taking his tail quietly in his mouth and thus endeavouring to impress on its hard nature the necessity of forsaking his ardent attachment. The leaders by this time had turned round to go towards the stable, but the outside trace still remaining hooked, pulled the fore-carriage round ; the off-wheel horse reared, a crowd gathered round, and the landlady had scrambled up and reached the door steps, leaving the ladies in the coach, one of them looking from the window, endeavouring to ascertain what was the matter. The landlord now came with a broomstick over his shoulder, looking as ferocious as an Italian bandit.

"Take care," cried he, "I'll soon make 'em leave go;" and began belabouring them both indiscriminately, while I, with shame be it spoken, was obliged to turn my head away and bury it in my hands

and coat to suppress the laughter that convulsed me. "Hullo!" exclaimed the governor, who witnessed the scene with a most serious visage, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself; why don't you assist."

Remonstrance, however, was for the present totally thrown away upon me. In a short time order and quiet were restored, and I became as the gravest. In handing the ladies to their seats, after their refreshment, I apologised for my unseasonable mirth; and, in answer, I received a gracious smile and a liberal *douceur*. The hostess was a little discomposed; but the horsekeeper was the only material sufferer, as he was compelled to part with his pet at a very reduced price—10s.—the author becoming the purchaser.

Stage-coach travelling had now approached, and on most roads had reached, perfection. It could not be expected that one

solitary specimen should be an exception in the general excellence, or should escape the notice of those who are ever ready, from envy or some other evil motive, to injure their neighbours, without the smallest rational hope of benefitting themselves.

Such there were on every line of road; and ours being the only coach below Cambridge which was worked in very superior style, it had long excited the admiration of the admirers of driving, who desired occasionally to indulge in the practice of now and then driving a first-rate team.

Among these was one, a wealthy yeoman, in a village near Ely, who had been an intimate friend and boon companion of my brother whip, but who latterly had not been on good terms with him. He, with two or three others, became the dupes of artful and designing men, like Monops, and, in conjunction with a fellow of a similar grade, was induced to put on a coach against us.

It being drawn by a pair only, it did us no harm, and would have died a natural death, had its starters not been assisted by the all-powerful Ann Nelson, who had found means of making her name known on almost every road out of London. It was then, judiciously on their parts, converted into a night coach; and though it might, and did, lessen our monthly dividends, it was no longer an eye-sore, except to my friend and partner Robert, who generally met it as it came from Lynn, and always on the Tuesday—that being the market-day—his old acquaintance, the Streatham Farmer, having hold of the reins.

It so happened that one fine summer evening, as Bob was going in to Lynn with his own drag, he met his old friend coming out with the "Rover," as the night coach was called. The road was wide enough, but the farmer being a very bad hand, suffered his leaders to

swerve. Coming closer to Robert than he liked, and he not willing to let an opportunity escape of showing the tender regard he had for his *quondam* friend, doubled up his thong, and fetched the farmer such a wipe over the face on passing as to leave the marks of a very sore impression.

It was impossible so sudden and so unexpected an attack could be resented in kind; therefore the farmer sought an alternative, more congenial to his feelings, by punishing Bob, as he thought, in a pecuniary way.

Two or three days after this, my friend Walker had occasion to go to London. He sat on the roof behind me, the box-seat being occupied, and a letter was put into his hand as we were about to start. When we got out of the town, he handed it over to me. It proved to be a letter from one of the lowest of the members of the legal profession, inti-

mating that if an apology for the assault on Mr. W. R. was not immediately published in the Cambridge papers, an action would be commenced; the same time demanding 6s. 8d. for the letter.

"What do you mean to do with it?" I enquired.

"Light this cigar with it," said he.

"No, don't do that," I observed. "Allow me to answer it, will you?"

He readily assented; when, on my return to Cambridge, I wrote and despatched the following little *jeu d'esprit* :—

Oh! Billy, Billy,
Why so silly
As to take the Law on Bob,
Because his crop
He chose to drop
Upon your empty nob.

You could not think
That Bob would wink
At such an awkward Jarvie,
Who meant to pitch
Him in the ditch,
So did it just to *sarve* ye.

I own 'twas wrong
The double thong
To throw about your face;
Then learn this rule
When next you tool,
To give a little space.

Now Bob's awake,
And as you take
This punishment so sadly,
You, if you please,
May pay the fees
To honest Lawyer Bradley.

The action proceeded, and was tried at Cambridge assizes—damages being laid at 100% ; and so confident were both the lawyer and client of obtaining a verdict—that should mulct poor Bob in one half of the value of his coach and horses—that they had ordered a grand dinner at one of the principal Inns, at which all who were in any way connected with the “Rover,” male or female, were invited, that they might chuckle over their assumed victory. But such is the uncertainty of the law, that the jury, by the direction of the judge—who stated that not being the appointed

coachman, the plaintiff had no right to drive—returned a verdict for the defendant in the shape of a nonsuit. Thus was their famous rejoicing turned into grief, as the plaintiff had to pay his friendly adviser 140*l.* for costs, while the defendant, calling no witnesses, got off for fifteen, which sum was cheerfully paid; and the issue of the trial was celebrated by my composing a song, in a rather homely but comic strain, giving the whole affair in detail.

This gave employment to the ballad singers of the town for the remainder of the assize, and a week or two after, and the lyric was not forgotten on the road till the "Rover" had ceased to run.

It was about this time that I took up with or commenced another profession, that has outlived the last; and as the origin of so unexampled a conjunction may not be uninteresting, I will give it a place here. Stopping one morning in the early part of the month of October, at the usual place to

lunch, a young gentleman who had been sitting behind, came and addressed me in a manner more respectful than men in my position generally look for ; and calling me by name, said he had seen my son yesterday. I understood him to mean my eldest son by my second marriage, who I had very early sent to an excellent school in my own native County. After this introduction he told me that he had received his education at the same academy—had been matriculated at Cambridge, and was about to commence his University career as a pensioner of Christ's College.

"Well," I replied, "if I can be of any service to you in making your stay agreeable, I hope that you will command me."

"I thought," he observed, "of doing myself the pleasure of calling on you."

"Do," I added, "as nothing will give me greater pleasure than to hear of my Hampshire friends."

After some few days occupied in

settling himself down quietly in his rooms, he came. In answer to my inquiries respecting the part of the County of which he was a native, he named the village near Rumsey, where my fat friend was so unceremoniously pitched into the purling brook by my carelessness. I could not help smiling at the remembrance of the wanton accident, and upon further inquiry found that the ducking the publican had received had not shortened his days, for he was still living. He continued his visits, and being what is termed a reading man, he conformed strictly to the discipline of the University; indeed was in great hopes, from having been at the head of the school in Hampshire, that he should be enabled to distinguish himself.

At Christmas vacation he did not go down; but on the day of that festivity he joined my family circle, which had got to be rather numerous.

After the customary turkey and chine, he

asked, "Have you heard the subject for the Prize Poem?" addressing me.

I said, "No. What is it?"

"The Conflagration of Rome by Nero."

"An excellent subject," I replied. "I hope you mean to try. It would be a great gratification to your friends were you to obtain the Chancellor's medal."

"It is my intention to do so, provided you will give me your assistance."

At this I laughed, and, indeed, almost ridiculed the idea of my very limited capacity being required for a purpose so much beyond its sphere. But he would not be put down. He had heard of me at my sister's in Hampshire, and had seen what he called proofs of my capability.

"Pooh, pooh," I exclaimed; "I may have been guilty of twisting some sorrowful reflections, or some morbid fancies, into verse and indulged in amatory effusions in rhyme—that is all. You must not consider

that this is any proof of the talent necessary for composing, in heroic metre, a fine historical subject like the one you name."

Finding he could not succeed with me, he addressed the lady facing me, and endeavoured to enlist her influence for the purpose he required.

After some varied and general conversation, in which I spoke of the impracticability of two persons writing together one poem, it was agreed, before we parted, that he should write one, and I attempt another; and that he should have his choice of the two—or send both in if he pleased.

During the time of my daily sojourn at Redbourn, I remember to have had placed in my hands the works of M. Volney, the only infidel writer of his nation, or, indeed, any other, who invites the reader, by the ease and elegance of his style, the apparent soundness of his logic, the novel and pleasing form of his

narrative, or the highly finished and interesting account of his travels—to doubt the truth of our holy religion. I had indulged in poring over authors, in my leisure hours—whose arguments, founded on indefatigable research and direct testimony—confuted the reasoning and exposed the sophistry of the French philosopher's insidious attacks ; and in searching for myself, I had become acquainted with many authors sacred and profane—ancient and modern—whose writings, in the remotest degree, had reference to this all-important subject.

Consequently, I had but to refresh my memory with Tacitus and Seutonius, and the writers on ecclesiastical history, to furnish me with the necessary incidents for a subject that comprised a period, when our creed was in its infancy, and when its growth was expedited by the very means taken for its destruction.

Meeting my friend shortly after, I

asked him if he had began his poem.

He replied, "No; have you done anything?"

"I have put together about 40 lines or so; if you will call this evening, you can see them, and you can judge for yourself."

He did so, and while I read, he listened very attentively. When I had concluded, he acknowledged that they were very beautiful, but assured me that they would not win the prize.

I then, of course, gave up all hopes of being of any assistance to him, but, from fancy, I pursued my task.

Not long after this interview I was summoned to Oxford, to attend the obsequies of one of my younger sisters, who had married and settled there, and had fallen a victim to consumption, in the full bloom of womanhood.

After the funeral, "when the baked meats were coldly furnished forth" usual

on such lamentable occasions, our grief was, in a great measure, alleviated by the kind condolence of the officiating clergyman, who, it appeared, was acquainted with my brother-in-law. He stopped and spent the afternoon with us; by his conversation I discovered that he was from the Principality, and at that time was engaged collecting, arranging, and, I believe, in translating, the productions of the old Welsh Bards, for the Society of Ancient Britons.

This led to a discourse on our modern English poets, and their several merits. I then, after relating to him the cause of my entering the lists, and the subject, ventured—with his permission—to repeat the few lines I had already written.

He expressed his surprise and admiration in very flattering terms, and, with all the ardour of a devotee of the Muses, urged me, nay, prayed of me, to go on with it.

I promised compliance; and in the

course of the Spring and Summer, unrestricted by the conditions that confined the poem to 200 lines, completed it in a little more than 500.

Meeting my friend in the May Term, he told me, in answer to my inquiry, that he had written his poem and sent it in, and that his Tutor had assured him that he had a very good chance of success.

"I am very happy to hear it," said I.

June came—with the long vacation, when all the men went away, and my friend, I found, had left College, and taken rooms in the town.

"Why is our friend not gone home?" enquired I of my wife.

"He is waiting to see to whom the Chancellor's medal is awarded."

"Well," I said, "he has only to go to the University Marshal's—he will tell him."

He did so, and the answer was, "No production good enough; therefore, no medal to be given."

Satisfied, but not gratified, my friend packed up his portmanteau and proceeded on his way to King's Somborne that same night.

Thus much for my versifying; and now for the fact of the designation which I afterwards received—"Dragsman and Poet"—being invariably affixed to my name when attached to a basket of game, or any other kind present or notification I so frequently received from the munificent inmates of Marham.

It did not require much labour or much expense to give birth to my little bantling, and scarce any preparation. I sent it to the printer's with, perhaps, not a little vanity, mixed up with the hope of pleasing my friends and assisting my exchequer—the absence of any Prize Poem for the year being very opportune—and equally acceptable to those who would dwell with wonder on the author's position. Its appearance was unlooked for; and,

therefore, took by surprise both Dons and Undergraduates, who had again began to assemble in October.

"You did not write that poem, Sir?" said the Professor of Modern History,* when he accosted me at the coach, as I was preparing to start.

"If I did not, perhaps you will inform me who did, Mr. Professor," I curtly replied.

"Where did you receive your education, Sir?" he demanded.

"In the cockpit of a man-of-war, Sir."

The Professor said no more, but bowed and walked away.

From this gentleman, the author of the life of Sheridan, I ever after received a polite recognition. Not so from the successor to the chair of this learned and amiable gentleman ; for I remember—shortly after "Othello's occupation was gone," and I had nothing to subsist on but the sale of my poor productions—calling upon him at

* The late Professor Smythe.

his rooms in Trinity Hall, to offer him a copy of my last production, "St. Paul's Vision," which had been more than sanctioned by his equals, if not his superiors,* in the University. I had scarcely time to name my business, when first a frown from his lowering brow, then a sneer at my presumption, and last a torrent of invective for daring to intrude or encroach on his privileges or privacy—I scarcely understood which—and he absolutely drove me from his presence. I was not just then armed with that stoic philosophy necessary to set at nought the contumely of my superiors; and I was about to fling back a volume of bitterness, when reason came to my aid, and whispered in my ear that neither the gentleman nor the Christian was always or necessarily combined with the scholar; and I silently, but moodily, turned away.

I had scarcely emerged from his college gate, and walked partly up Senate House

* *Vide* Dr. Whewell's note at the end of this chapter.

Passage, when a gentleman in his academics crossed my path, and, stopping, asked what I had under my arm. "Nothing, sir, nothing," I replied, my eyes on the ground, and my mind brooding on the wound my pride had received; I did not stop to observe his benevolent aspect, neither was I roused from my gloomy mood by the kindness of his speech and manner, but moved to pass on.

"Stop," he cried—"stop—you forget me, I fear."

I looked up and recognized the features of one who had been foremost in the University to praise and patronise my maiden effort.*

"What are you doing now?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing? Have you not written anything lately? You promised me a copy of any future productions long ago."

I immediately handed him one, when he paid me with a coin far above the

* The Rev. — Romilly, Registrar of the University.

price set upon his purchase. I was about to give him change.

"No," he said; "if I like this as well as I did the first, I shall remain your debtor."

How blind are we mortals to the effects of good or evil that spring from accident; and how prone are we to forget when the scale of evil or injury appears to be overloaded, how soon it may be counterpoised.

Without travelling beyond the limits I had prescribed myself when I commenced this narrative, I have recorded this as an occurrence that arose entirely, as I have shewn, from the position I then occupied (which forms the title of this book), and was immediately associated with it—for the merits and the errors of my production (for they were many) were almost daily discussed on the box, and I continued to receive praise and remuneration from noblemen and gentlemen whose sons had forwarded to them copies from the University.

But the chief benefit I derived from it—that is, what I most valued—was the introduction it gave me to one whose noble and generous heart was warmed by the blood that had flowed in the veins of magnates of the land ever since the Conquest. He himself was a votary of the Muses, and exercised his pen in composing a few lines in a laughable strain, on so strange a display as Pegasus in harness, or a coach and four, attempting to climb Olympus. Those lines I have lost, unfortunately, though they led to a correspondence that terminated only with the loss of sight of the fine old Field-Marshal,* who, if he did not emulate the deeds of his famous brother-in-arms in the field, did, by his actions, conciliate the goodwill and esteem of all with whom he came in contact, and was soon after one of my principal patrons.

The success that attended this my first and accidental effort induced me to pursue

* Field-Marshal Thomas Grosvenor.

the calling ; and elated, if not intoxicated, I ventured on another, or sequel to the first, as I thought the subject capable of further elucidation. A copy of this I sent to my friend the General (he had not then attained the rank that was afterwards conferred on him), and this led to a correspondence which was most amusing, as it developed the eccentric turn of mind of this lover of the Muses. It was very friendly in the expressions it contained of his acknowledgments of, and willingness to advance, my pretensions. His next note, in which the merits of this my second attempt (Paul before Nero) was discussed, was accompanied with one from a lady of high rank and literary reputation, urging me to carry out the poem to its proper termination, and wishing me every success.

It was upon the heel of this correspondence that I had one day for my box companion a gentleman who had

purchased one of these little productions at Cambridge, and, after having perused it, was pleased to speak of it in terms far from disagreeable to my feelings. He dwelt most on what he termed the vigorous and graphic style in which it was written, stating, at the same time, that I ought to write a play, as, if I succeeded, I should find it far more remunerative.

This gentleman's conversation made a considerable impression on me; and on my retiring to rest that night, I called to mind my friend Elliston, and the laughter and ridicule with which I used to meet his repeated importunities.

However, with the recollection of him, and what now flattered me as being his sincere opinion, and at the instigation or recommendation of my box companion, I attempted a play, which I completed in five acts. I had the temerity to submit it to the management of Drury Lane, with the foolish hope that its

merit might authorise or justify its introduction on those boards, where my departed friend had presided with so much *éclat*.

On my calling at the theatre some little time after, this hallucination was soon dispersed by the reader, who returned it with many fair speeches, first telling me that Mr. Macready's lease had nearly expired, and at the same time stating that they had another play with the same title.

Thinking this a very strange coincidence, I resolved upon publishing mine, which I did by subscription, and it was honoured with the names of the Lord Lieutenant of the County, some of the most distinguished members of the University, as well as nearly all the nobility and gentry of the western division of the county of Norfolk. It was performed at both the Cambridge and Lynn theatres, —the good old Field-Marshal bespeaking at one, and the popular member for West

Norfolk at the other.* Its reception at both places, by genteel and crowded audiences, particularly at the latter, was highly satisfactory, and far more agreeable then, than is the recapitulation of such flattering testimonies now.

It was not long after this that I was requested by the editor of one of the Cambridge papers to write a critique on Mr. C. Kean's performance of *Richard*. This led me into a dissertation upon the garbled and mutilated text of that fine original, which I delivered in the shape of a lecture at Cambridge, Ely, and Lynn, severally, at each of which places I had no reason to complain of the manner of my reception.

Shortly after this I was applied to by a gentleman resident at Hackney, to deliver three lectures on the plays of Shakspeare, on three consecutive Monday evenings, at the

* W. Bagge, Esq., to whose liberal and constant patronage, with that of his family, the author cannot sufficiently express his gratitude.

Mechanics' Institute in that place. The selection of the plays was left to my discretion, and I made choice of "Richard the Third," "Macbeth," and "Julius Cæsar," as bearing on remarkable epochs in history, rife with dramatic incident and powerful elocution—all giving astounding proofs of the skill, capacity, and endowments of their immortal author. I was listened to with profound attention on each occasion, although the audience was not so crowded as my friend either desired or expected. Nevertheless, the composition of these discourses occupied my leisure, and diverted my mind, or prepared it for the great change that was fast approaching. About this period I was honoured with the following note:—

"Dr. Whewell returns his thanks to Mr. Cross for his poem of 'Paul's Vision,' which he has read with great pleasure and interest.

"If agreeable to Mr. Cross, Dr. Whewell would be glad to have two or three additional copies, which will perhaps come within the accompanying sum.

"Trinity Lodge, Feb. 11, 1850."

CHAPTER VI.

THE FINISH.

The Craft—One Good Turn—Another—Compensation—
 Railroads—Eastern Counties—Norfolk Farming—The
 Eccentrics—Strange Company—A *Tête-à-tête*—Publicola
 —A Constitutional Lawyer—Stand-up Fight—Two
 Polished Gentlemen—Dilemma—Celebrated Duellist—
 Bold Stroke—Lucky Escape—The Fall of the Curtain.

HAVING arrived at the last stage of this not very eventful, and perhaps not very amusing narrative, it will not be thought irrelevant if I take a slight view of my craft or fraternity before it quite fell into almost utter oblivion. I cannot, if I would, draw a correct portrait of any of my most celebrated

compeers any further than I have done ; for I will at once admit I never felt myself sufficiently competent to converse in a language, the acquisition of which was considered a great accomplishment ; and altogether it was an association to which I no longer coveted to belong.

Nevertheless, there were some very respectable and very worthy men among them ; men that were a credit to their station, and upheld it both before and after the profession had become a refuge for broken-down gentlemen, or the summit of ambition to aspiring cads. For competition had so disarranged or altered the original system of conducting stage-coach business, that the titled aristocrat, and the lowest applicant, with the means of hanging on or working a stage, were equally admissible to those large establishments in London, where the antecedents either of character or professional skill, were of little or no considera-

tion. One family in particular, whose name was familiar to the traveller in the South and South-West of England, still retained their hold on the estimation of the neighbouring gentry; and when the rail put an end to the lingering career of Francis Faulkner and the "Portsmouth Rocket" (the same drag on which the author first exhibited)—to their honour be it recorded—they bought for him a handsome annuity, which descends to the next generation.

This is a solitary instance of voluntary compensation, one worthy of more general adoption; and it is also what justice and equity require from the hands of those who, by sanctioning and encouraging, if not forming the rail, cut the ground from under the feet of a part of the community, to say the least, not altogether unworthy of notice, and precipitated them to destruction; for no employment being offered them by those who had taken

away their very means of existence, many were driven to the most abject poverty, and some few, in despair, committed suicide.

For myself every exertion was made by my friends on the line of road to obtain for me employment. Testimonials were got up and signed by almost all the nobility and gentry in the two Counties. This the directors could not refuse to notice, and I was called one hundred miles before their board, when a sharp-visaged, evil-eyed worthy, who acted as chairman, told me very coolly—without the least feeling or remorse at thus plunging a whole family in destitution, for aught he knew—that the directors had decided upon not employing any one who had, or ever had, anything to do with stage-coach business. He then dismissed me, without offering to pay my expenses, or compensating me for the loss of time I had incurred by attending his summons.

But he was a professional gentleman, not troubled with a conscience, and possessed a heart as hard as the metal that formed the staple of the company over which he presided.

Another of the legal profession, from whose office emanated the line that gave the death-blow to my avocation, resisted every effort made for me by others, and all my own applications for employment, and consigned me and mine, without mercy and without even a hearing, to poverty and want.

On being asked by a venerable clergyman of the Establishment,* whose appearance as well as his preaching always reminded me of one of the Apostles—if any provision had been made for me, I said, “No.” This excited his commiseration and surprise, which he expressed in most earnest language; and I, feeling as if in the presence of some superior being,

* The Rev. — Edwards.

warming with the subject, and stung with the injury that surely awaited me, appealed to him to be my witness on the great day of judgment, when I would arraign that man as being the author of all the evil that would befall my family.

I might have expressed myself a little too warmly, perhaps indiscreetly, nay, unjustly, on this occasion; but I could not restrain the poignancy of my feelings at thus being deliberately handed over to destitution, without pity and without a thought, by a gentleman with a family of his own, that, when young, I frequently had charge of (one of them has, deservedly, risen to almost the highest dignity in the Church). He evidently had it in his power, by holding out his hand, to save me from going down with the wreck he had been the principal means of creating.

Let not the reader suppose that from the amount of injury I received—it being

nothing short of absolutely depriving me of the means of subsistence—that I was inimical, or even indifferent, to the magnitude and importance of the great work going on throughout the country; or that I considered that the interests of the few should stand in the way of the many.

I only wish to record the injustice done to a set of men who, most certainly, had vested rights in the old method of travelling—if the means of subsistence are considered so—and in most, if not in all, other organic changes, those vested rights have been acknowledged by the Legislature. In the instance of the Municipal Reform Bill, compensation was granted to those legal officials who had held appointments in some close corporation, or under some distinguished nobleman or gentleman—patrons of the borough—and who were relieved from their arduous duties by the will of the new constituencies.

That the case of the one should not

meet with the same attention and the same result as the other, must be attributed to the constitution of the Lower House. Those whose duty it is to frame the law on such occasions, depute it to craftsmen, who, like the artificers at Ephesus, when persuaded that their craft was in danger, cried, "Great is Diana, of the Ephesians!"

It has been said that, in the early part of this great social revolution, money was given to two or three of the great men in London, to share and distribute among others who were equally entitled to it. If this were so, these gentlemen knew pretty well how to appropriate it.

If a stranger or foreigner were to land in this country, like Goldsmith's "Citizen of the World," the first thing that would be most likely to attract his notice is the ease, safety, and expedition of our mode of travelling; and he could not be too lavish in his praise of the skill, industry, enterprise, and wealth of the

nation that had constructed the vast number of miles and the various ramifications of our railroads.

He would not perhaps, like the French philosopher, set them down as the cause, but as the effects of our civilization. Neither would he discover, in his admiration of their adaptation to the wants of a great trading community, that, for the most part—they were conceived in error—born in misrepresentation and falsehood—reared in malversation and fraud,—and attained their present growth by monopoly and injustice.

But the injury done to those who have suffered by the change, is as nothing compared to those deluded victims who first became the dupes of designing men, in being induced to risk their little, or their all, in extravagant speculations that were at once to ensure fortune to the lucky adventurer, but resulted only in their total and irremediable ruin.*

* The great distress and ruin that followed the immense

The present absolute insolvency of nearly all the lines, and the state of the dividends, give ample testimony to the truth of this observation. Nevertheless, if ever that common but cruel maxim, "The end justifies the means," is to be admitted, this instance may very properly be set down as one.

The same stranger, with his eyes darkened as to the origin of this vast monument to our riches and glory as a nation, would also fail to perceive the great benefit that would accrue to the revenue, or that could be made available by a skilful and experienced financier, were he to cast his eye on the constant circulation the tide of locomotion creates.

In my despair of getting either commission or scrip for new undertakings, was not inaptly compared, at the time, to the bursting of the South Sea bubble about a century before; but in its extent and magnitude it bore the same relative proportion as that

"To which Diana's marvel was a cell."

Or, to make use of a more homely simile—

"And Milo's ox a pigmy to the friar!"

pensation or employment from those who were about to supersede me and my calling, I drew up a petition to the House of Commons, and had it engrossed. It was presented by my kind friend, the late Lord Jocelyn, than whom a more amiable nobleman did not exist; but, like many other petitions of greater or less importance, it was ordered to lay on the table. To the petition, which is annexed to this volume, I must refer my readers as to the propriety, as well as the safety and justice, of considering travelling by rail a fair and legitimate object of taxation.

Mr. Pitt rose the stage-coach duty (if he did not originate it) from 1*d.* to 6*d.* per mile, and it then furnished a considerable item of the revenue; and now, when travelling has multiplied more than a hundred fold, it contributes a mere trifle to the exigencies of the State. As it partakes of the nature both of a poll and a property tax, it comes recom-

mended by all writers on political economy, who have declared that to be the legitimate basis on which all national revenues should be founded. As the subject may be ventilated in higher quarters, I will not pursue it further, but return to my own immediate concerns.

The first attempt at forming a line of rail from Cambridge to London was, by the folly of some and the knavery of others, a failure; and what was intended for and called the North-Eastern, which, if properly carried out, would have precluded the necessity of the Great Northern from Huntingdon to the metropolis, was committed to and amalgamated with the Eastern Counties. After a considerable time had been lost in preliminaries, and enormous expenses incurred in Parliament, the company succeeded in getting the line down to Broxbourne, about fifteen miles by the turnpike from Shoreditch church. For that short distance it was not thought de-

sirable to be at the trouble of putting on the coach with which I was concerned, though the Wisbeach and one of the early Cambridge coaches took advantage of it. After far more than necessary time had been spent, in which the incapacity of the directors and the want of funds were both conspicuous, the line reached Bishop's Stortford, when, at the instigation of the London Proprietors, who had become deeply interested in railroads, the old Lynn coach company was dissolved, and a new proprietor was admitted at Cambridge. In the fresh arrangement that was made I had to turn my back upon London, and drive from Cambridge to Lynn, or do nothing—a sad alternative, but there was no help for it.

This was the first blow given to my domestic establishment; and the comfort I derived from having my Sundays at home. It did not seem to decrease the dislike I had long taken to the profession, to which perhaps the undeserved praises bestowed on

my other avocation had first given rise. There was no novelty to charm me, everything seemed as dull and dreary as the road I travelled on through the Fens, and the prospect—so evident to my visual organ—painfully and constantly presented to my mental vision a similar and as gloomy a picture.

Nevertheless, I was now and then cheered with the company of my excellent friend from Marham, and was sometimes amused by the various and *naïve* observations of some of my fellow-travellers, not excluding the female part, as to my future, in which many of them, I believe, felt a sincere interest; although one from the neighbourhood of Downham, a Baronet, I remember, whose intellect was as lofty as his heart was noble, and who was altogether, and always had been, an exception to his neighbours in his urbanity, told me one day on the box, by way of consolation, “that I *could* ring the bell for the starting of the train.” A visit,

too, now to Stradsett,* then to Narford,† but more frequently to Marham—and a hearty welcome among some few of the yeomanry—among whom must be reckoned Mr. John Gamble of Shouldham Thorpe, well known for his splendid breed of Shorthorns, selected with good judgment, and maintained at considerable expense—and that excellent agriculturist, Mr. John Negus, of Crimplesham, with whom and whose amiable family I and mine were on a footing of intimacy—helped to relieve the monotony of my daily existence.

On my first visit to this fine specimen of an English farmer, he proposed, after breakfast, a ride round the farm. I readily acquiesced, and, mounting me on a favourite cob, we almost made the circuit of every field. It really was a sight pleasing to behold—if only to contrast the present per-

* The seat of W. Bagge, Esq., for many years M.P. for the Western division of the County.

† The seat of Andrew Fountaine, Esq.

fect system of agriculture with the slow progress our fathers had made in this most useful art. The large square enclosures were surrounded by a fence that while it prevented the trespass of sheep or swine, admitted the plough to the very edge ; and was, from being kept constantly in order, of no obstacle to either sun or wind—thus rendering every foot of land available. The pastures were rich, and teemed with thriving Devon oxen and South Down sheep of the purest breed. The corn was in the ear, for it was Summer time, and the tall standing stalks, free from either the red or white weed, thickly wafted to and fro by the wind, gave promise of a most prolific yield. The Mangel and Swedes had been cut out, and growing on ridges, more than common care had been bestowed, one would suppose, to give the plant a healthy and vigorous appearance—while the fallows were as clean as plough and harrow—men, women, and boys—could make them. At

the finish I remember, when we had made the tour of the farm—over five hundred acres—as we sat on our horses in the paddock facing the house, the farmer said to me, with an air of triumph which he might most justly adopt.

“Now you have seen all—what do you think of this for farming?”

During our ride I had made no remark except as to the appearance of the crops or the fineness of the weather. Therefore, looking at him very seriously, I replied—

“Why, Mr. Negus, I don’t call it farming at all.”

A gloom came over his fine old rubicund countenance—which as quickly vanished as I added—“I call it—gardening.”

The same observation will apply to many of his neighbours—more particularly to a farm I daily passed in my avocation, and which, under the judicious and most attentive management of the late Mr. William Cambridge, many years the

tenant of Caius College, Cambridge, at South Runcton, was considered the model farm of the County, and never failed to attract the attention of the traveller. The nation certainly owes an immense debt of gratitude to the late noble owner of Halcomb for originating, encouraging, and progressively improving a system of agriculture, that, having been taken up and followed by an intelligent tenantry, has now, by the force of example, raised the County to unrivalled excellence, and made the name of a Norfolk farmer to be held in the highest estimation throughout the kingdom. The periodical agricultural meetings, both central and provincial, have also taken their rise from the same enlightened and practical mind, and will continue ever to be a deserving tribute to his memory. They have conferred the greatest benefit on the community, and so long as the country lasts, the name of Thomas William Coke

will be as deservedly immortal as that of a Stephenson or a Brunel.

"Praised for their virtues, which improve mankind."

With all this, I could but regret the loss of the society I met with in London.

In vain did I look for that intellectual enjoyment an evening at the Eccentrics would afford. To this club, which has since, I believe, become extinct, and in whose lists the names of celebrated men of old were enrolled, I was frequently admitted. At one time it was the resort of some of the greatest wits and most eminent statesmen of the day, and at the time I speak of it had not lost all its charms. Though I did not then meet a Pitt or a Fox, a Burke or a Sheridan, yet these great men, with Lord Liverpool and Mr. Canning, had all been members of the Eccentrics; and I have met and conversed with there, many members of the senate—on one occasion I remember noticing one who has since held almost the highest

office in the state, and now leads the opposition in the House of Commons. I sat *tête-à-tête* here with him, conversing on various topics, political and literary, when, from his highly-polished manner, and what I thought to be a cultivated taste, unmarked, as his conversation was, by any assumed condescension, he seemed to me to develop gifts and attainments of the highest order; and we parted, as I flattered myself, at a late or rather at an early hour, well pleased with each other's company.

But he was not the only great public man I met there. Another, who gloried in the name of "Publicola," I frequently encountered. His manners and his conversation were as unrefined and as *brutally** pointed as were his celebrated articles in the "Weekly Dispatch," and his habits appeared to be as loose in their nature as his political creed was false and malignant.

* A word of frequent recurrence in his would-be inflammatory letters.

His portrait has been well depicted by the author of "Ten Thousand a Year;" but he must have been a man of considerably more calibre than ever I took him to be, to have attracted the notice of so *unbiased* and so discriminating a satirist. His frequent contests with a little chancery barrister—the Constitutional lawyer, as he was there termed—were highly amusing. They were well matched for size as well as volubility; and one night, when he had roused, by his coarse aspersions, the political irascibility of his opponent—not a little sharpened by the potations he had taken—the barrister said—

"Stand upon your pins, Sir, and defend yourself, or I'll knock you down!"

But before my friend Publicola could put himself in attitude, the Constitutional lawyer, not able to keep his equilibrium—fell flat on his face, to the great laughter of the whole room.

There were members of either Univer-

sity, editors and reporters, authors and artists, wits and men about town, who contributed on most evenings when I was admitted to the social and intellectual enjoyment.

On one occasion a scion of the nobility, of whose acquaintance I was somewhat proud—and while really deserving the name of an eccentric, was a kind friend and more worthy gentleman*—introduced two New Zealand chiefs, dressed as Englishmen. Their real character did not first strike me; but on my endeavouring to address them, their reply was so incomprehensible, and their looks and gesticulations so ferocious, that my friend thought it necessary to put his head over the box, and whisper in my ear to warn me not to aggravate them by any further remarks, or they would kill and eat me. Not wishing to be food for cannibals, I desisted trying to elicit anything more from them; but they seemed on good

* The late W. Barham, Esq.

terms with themselves and the captain who had brought them over ; for he soon after joined them, and with him, after certain libations, they walked quietly away.

But a man may run more risks in a civilized society even—as it is called—than when in the company of savages, as the following anecdote will shew. One evening in the same room, I had been giving my opinion freely upon a certain subject, without observing the disapprobation of a gentleman to whom my back was turned, and the signs and winks of the gentlemen in the same box to whom I was addressing myself failed to make me understand my danger. Warming with the subject, I animadverted strongly, and no doubt indiscreetly, on the conduct of certain inhabitants of a certain portion of the empire. This called forth his intense indignation. Rising from his seat, he came towards the table at which I was sitting, and putting both his hands upon it, said, in a most solemn tone, that he would

sit no longer and hear his country and his friends traduced. He insisted on my retracting all I had said, for he considered himself grossly insulted by the remarks I had chosen to make, and stated that he should therefore hold me accountable for them.

I must confess to have been a little surprised and perhaps unnerved by the very determined manner in which he delivered himself, and some of my companions stared at him with astonishment. However, soon recovering myself, and not at all misconstruing his meaning, I deliberately said, "I am sorry, Sir, my conversation has discomposed you, or that any observation I should have made has in the smallest degree outraged your feelings; but as to retracting what I have said, knowing it to be true, I must decline, as it would be giving myself the lie, and that I will not do for any one."

"Then, Sir, you know the alternative," he observed, and resumed his seat.

That alternative I knew very well; con-

sequently, I found myself in an awful scrape ; but thinking there was nothing like being open and honest, I at once told him it would not be in my power to comply with his wishes.

“ Why not, Sir ? ”

I told him there were many obstacles.

“ In the first place, I acknowledge to you I do not move in that circle where the practices you seem so well acquainted with are known.”

“ Do you mean to say you are not a gentleman ? ”

“ Not in the sense you understand that term.”

“ Then you have no business here.”

“ But I am admitted here, and no objection has ever been made to me on account of my profession.”

“ And what may that profession be, Sir ? ” he demanded.

“ Why, sir,” I replied, “ I drive a stage-coach, and shall be wanted to fulfil my

duties at half-past seven to-morrow morning, which is about the time, I imagine, you would require my company at Chalk Farm, or some neighbouring spot."

"Most certainly."

"Well, Sir," I continued, "I have a wife and eight children—you surely would not have me put their welfare upon the stake for the very small offence I have unwittingly given you."

"You should have thought of that before you committed the offence."

Finding that nothing could appease him, I held my tongue, and sat musing on the dilemma I was in, and wondering how I should extricate myself. I could not leave the room like a cur—if I did I felt assured some personal indignity would be offered me—I could not deride him, nor would I apologise any further.

As I sat twirling the spoon in my empty glass, a thought suddenly struck me, or rather came back on me, as thoughts

sometimes will do unaccountably—as the poet so beautifully likens them to the distant thunder in the dying wind—and I as instantly resolved to act upon it. It was this: In my early manhood I had attended a ball at the Benevolent Society's rooms at Portsea, where I had met many of the dock-yard officials and their families, also some of the most respectable tradesmen in the town. There were generally a few naval officers present, and they were mostly, with one or two exceptions, of the civil department—that is, doctors and pursers. The admission was by tickets. On one occasion the room was crowded with beauty, if not fashion; the music was delightful; the votaries of Terpsichore were giving full play to their ecstatic enjoyment—the evening was advancing, when, hearing some rather loud talking, I turned my head towards the folding doors that formed the entrance, and saw there a post-captain in full uniform, whom I immediately knew to be the celebrated duellist,

Captain Macnamara. He had hold of the arm of a tall gentleman, whom I also knew as Mr. Butt, one of the highest officials in the Navy Pay Office.* The music ceased as well as the dancing; and two of the stewards walked up to know what was the cause of this interruption, when the doorkeeper informed them that Captain Macnamara had insisted on being admitted without a ticket. This caused no little altercation, during which one of the stewards denounced such conduct as unbecoming a gentleman. The captain, asserting that this was language he was not accustomed to, said that he should expect satisfaction for it, adding, he was ready for anything.

“As many as you please, gentlemen,” said he—with a most inviting smile. A friend of mine, one of the stewards, always what is now termed a plucky fellow, now stepped up to him—

* This is the same gentleman who shared the fortunes of Lord Cochrane in the famous Stock Exchange trial.

“I understand you, Captain Macnamara, I accept the challenge,” he whispered, putting his mouth to his ear, and added—
“Over a pocket handkerchief, and within an hour.”

Though I thought at the time that there was more courage than discretion in this, it had the desired effect, and Captain Macnamara and his friend retired—not quite so elated as when they entered.

In the present instance the company had dropped off one by one, some of them wishing me good-bye as they made their exit, with most significant looks. In the meantime, the gentleman sat with his feet upon the fender, evidently waiting to push the matter to extremity. When all were gone but one I said to him—

“I think you expressed yourself as not satisfied with the explanation I attempted just now?”

“By no means,” he replied.

“Then,” I replied, “you shall have the

satisfaction you require; but it must be now, and in this room."

Silencing the remonstrance of my only remaining companion by a slight pressure of his toe, and an expression of countenance very different from his, I got up and paced the floor of the room.

"This is about the distance these things are generally done at," said I; "and waiter," I cried, addressing the man with my finger on my lips, and slipping something into his hand the better to impress the necessity of silence—"Take this card round to Mr. — in St. Martin's Lane, and he will give you a case of pistols—bring them here."

"But, Sir," said he, "the people of the house."

"We can wait till they are gone to rest. Hark, they are about going now."

"But we shall disturb them."

"That will be of little consequence to one or both of us," I replied.

"Really, it is a very unusual way of settling matters."

"I am aware of it, Sir, but I have no choice. This gentleman will act as my friend, and the waiter, when he returns, must do the same for you, as the shortness of the time will admit of no other arrangement."

At this he began to demur, when I said I could allow of no hesitation.

On the waiter's return he rose from his seat, and on my requesting him to stop and examine the pistols, observed that he would have no more to do with me, and made his exit into the court. I at the same time made him a polite but significant bow, and then followed, congratulating myself and my friend on the easy manner I had extricated myself from so disagreeable a position.

On the following morning the good old squire was my box companion, and the account of my preceding evening's amuse-

ment on the journey down called forth some of his hearty laughs.

But to leave these vanities, and come at once, however abruptly, to a conclusion, the close of my career was fast approaching. The sun of my employment, or, more properly speaking, of my enjoyment, had set when I left the London end, and I was existing as it were in the twilight. Everybody, great and small, rich and poor, was lauding the train, and seemed to be proudly anticipating the change from the slow old coach, as by comparison it was, to the splendid rail. The shades of night gathered fast around me, and presently the curtain dropped, and extinguished my calling for ever.

POSTSCRIPT.

AN oral or traditional account of any circumstance more properly belonging to history is always subject to error in an autobiography written after the lapse of half a century. And it is more than probable that an impression, however erroneously received at the time, would be grafted on others of a similar nature with which it was directly connected.

In the first volume of this work it is stated* that *three* courts-martial were to have been held on three of the principal officers of the Fleet, on its return to Spit-

* Chapter v., page 167.

head from its gallant and successful achievement in Basque Roads.

Now, it does not appear, either from the "Autobiography of a Seaman," or from the "Memoirs Historical and Personal of Lord Gambier," two recent publications, that any trial took place arising out of that affair subsequent to those of Sir Eliab Harvey and Lord Gambier.

Therefore must the author have confounded the third, which he has stated was held on Lord Cochrane with that on Lord Gambier, in which the former appeared ostensibly as prosecutor.

The author has also stated that in his conversation with Sir Eliab Harvey on the coach-box, in answer to his question he told him (Sir E.) the last time he saw him was on board the "Gladiator," the reader is not to infer from this that the author witnessed his court-martial. He did not; for though on board at the time, the court was far too crowded to gain admittance; but on the

trial of Lord Gambier, through the instrumentality of the Judge-Advocate, or some one in his office, he obtained a standing-place in the cabin of the "Gladiator," as close to the president as the court allowed to spectators, and which, from the confined accommodation, might almost be said to be beside him.

In my early tuition in the Royal Navy, and from my experience, short as it was, I had been always led to believe that a proper submission and a respectful demeanour to our superiors was not only looked for from all grades, but established by the articles of war, as the very groundwork of discipline, and as such had become the rule of the service. I had also been taught to look upon a Naval court-martial as a most august, if not an awful tribunal; and when I saw in that assemblage so many distinguished veterans, I could but feel surprised at the very off-hand manner, and what appeared to me, to say the least, the

disrespectful conduct of Lord Cochrane to the whole court, which was more than once animadverted on by the president and others. Hence the expectations and the rumours of a third court-martial, and hence the author's mistake—to understand which properly he begs to refer the reader to the trial of Lord Gambier, taken in short-hand by Gurney at the time, and published at Portsmouth.

The discrepancies between Lord Donald's and Lady Chatterton's account of this memorable event must be reconciled by abler pens than mine, and if possible a correct elucidation of the facts elicited by more acute reasoners.

The gratitude, if not the generosity, of the British nation has been manifested on a recent occasion in the funeral of one of its most brave and scientific naval heroes, whose daring acts blaze like a meteor in our Naval annals; but the historian will pause—before he ventures to record the capacity or the skill of an Admiral—who never manœu-

vred a fleet in line of battle, and whose exploits, brilliant though they were, will not compete in magnitude or importance with those of the immortal Nelson.

APPENDIX.

IN taking a pleasing though melancholy retrospective view of the departed—that is, of stage-coach travelling, and the excellence to which it had arrived immediately prior to the introduction of railroads—we are apt to overlook some of the means by which it attained perfection, as well as the arrangements that helped to produce it.

Among the latter, I must name the great improvement that appeared in the men, who gave a character to, and raised the profession of the stage coachman, in the

estimation of the community generally.

The great change from the old to the new school I have had occasion slightly to touch upon in the body of this book ; but as not the least important cause of this change may be attributed to the establishment of the B.D.C., I hope that it will not be thought out of the way if I give some account of this, alas ! defunct body.

Its records are but few, and its institution, and the names of the original members, live only in their descendants, or in the memory of those who have survived its dissolution.

The gentleman under whose flattering auspices this present work will see the light has in his possession a gold cup, on which is engraved the names of the original founders of this once celebrated club. The inscription runs thus :—

“Presented by the *original* and *under-written* members of the B.D.C., as a testimony of their regard and a token of their

good wishes for the happiness and prosperity of the club.

"A. ANESLEY	H. VILLEBOIS
SIR HENRY PEYTON	T. WHITMORE
T. HARRISON	CAPT. HAMILTON
H. F. OKEOVER."	

The first on the list is Arthur Anesley, Esq., a gentleman of Oxfordshire, whose portly figure I remember well, sitting behind his four red roans, and exhibiting all the skill and accomplishments of a first-rate artist.

Sir Henry Peyton, Bart., was long a most active member of the club, and took considerable interest in the well-doing of several professionals, whom he liberally patronised, and when in town would frequently and separately visit them at the office from which their drags set out, mounted on his handsome grey cob, criticizing and passing encomiums on all that he admired. He always drove four greys, a good-looking team, though slow, which he handled well,

and was looked up to by his fellows as a Nestor, experienced in the art, both willing and capable of giving instructions to the younger practitioner.

With him was associated a gentleman I have had occasion to name before—the late Henry Villebois, Esq., of Marham, in the county of Norfolk, brother of Mr. Truman Villebois, who for so many years was master of the Hampshire Hounds; also of Mr. Frederick Villebois, who had the Craven Hounds some few years, and father of the present owner of Marham, H. Villebois, Esq., Master of the Norfolk Hounds, who, as one of the survivors of the club, has permitted me to dedicate this work to him. No one who knew the Father will ever cease to remember his kind and generous nature. His portrait, that now hangs over my mantel-piece, the last gift of this worthy member of the B.D.C., causes me frequently to recall his many excellent qualities, as a man and as a work-

man. These, with the names of T. Harrison, Esq., of Shelswell, T. Whitmore, Esq., of Apley Castle, Shropshire, Captain Hamilton, of the Guards, and H. F. Okeover, Esq., a name well known in the sporting circles of those days, form the original members of the club that was instituted on the 8th of February, 1807.

Among the first whose names were added to the original list, and may be almost identified with them, was old John Warde, as he was called in my younger days, when, in company with the late Mr. William Rogers, of Southampton,* at a meet with the new Forest Hounds, I have sat on my horse and smiled at his dry jokes and quaint sayings, for which he was as well known as he was for his fox-hunting or his driving qualifications. Upon the box behind his four old hunters, both from his figure and manner, he looked a true speci-

* A Coach Proprietor, well known for the superior manner in which all his appointments were made, and also for his boldness and judgment in the field.

men of the old school ; indeed, it was upon the old heavy night coaches—the “ Gloucester,” the “ Worcester,” and the “ Shrewsbury Prince”—that he became initiated in the art of driving long before those improvements had taken place which seemed to go hand-in-hand with the progress that better roads and more sightly conveyances were making.

Many names were afterwards added ; among others, Major Spirer, of Esher Place, Surrey, who still carries out the original intentions of the club—that is, to delight in the practice of the art of driving four horses, and to encourage and reward the more humble practitioner.

And after him the late Duke of Beaufort—then Marquis of Worcester—to whom I had the honour of imparting a few lessons on his first attempt at being made acquainted with an art of which he afterwards became so conspicuous and so admired an amateur.

This was called the Benson Driving

Club, as originating at Oxford, and the members performing their first exercises on their own drags on that twelve miles of road; but leaving the University, and increasing in numbers, the name was altered to the Bedfont Driving Club, Bedfont being the place to which they uniformly, twice a-year, proceeded with their teams, in the best style, to partake of some of the most excellent viands and wines—to ballot for new members, and award some mark of distinction, or reward with pecuniary assistance, to a deserving professor in the class below them.

Their frequent appearance in the Park, and on the road leading from the West end of the metropolis, gained the admiration of the populace, and in a few short years gave rise to another driving club, called the Four-in-Hand—by the vulgar, the Bang-up—and this also included many noblemen and gentlemen of rank and importance; Lord Hawke, Sir Bellingham Graham,

Colonel Berkeley, Mr. Maxe, Mr. Osbaldiston, Sir Felix Agar, Mr. Charles Buxton, and many others. The latter gentleman did no little service to the art by the introduction of the bit that bears his name, which has become of general use.

It has been my fate and was my delight to feast my eyes on some splendid turns-out. At that time the Park would be crowded, as it seldom was on other occasions, to witness the performances of these several lovers of the art, and to admire their equipages.

Lord Hawke's four chestnuts would be much spoken of, although his lordship's judgment, either in selecting or in driving them, did not quite correspond with the skill and knowledge of his profession displayed by his gallant ancestor.

Sir B. Graham's four matched only for pace, and his perfectly easy manner in handling them—gave sufficient evidence of his knowing his business. Mr. Osbaldiston

followed much in the same style ; and it was not difficult for the observer to recognise in these gentlemen—two dashing and spirited masters of another sport that was frequently associated with this—Foxhunting—and that found amusement and employment for both them and their teams in the winter months.

To these the nice measured pace of Mr. Buxton's four bays, the particular attention that had been paid to every part of the harness, his gentlemanly appearance on the box, his light hand and careful hold of the reins, his watchful eye on their every step, formed a striking contrast.

But when Sir Felix Agar turned in at the Park gates in magnificent style, with his four iron greys—the cost of each, I should guess, was little under 250 or 300 guineas—every horse carrying his head in the right place, the appointments all scrupulously correct, the driver sitting erect on the box, in perfect command of the team, it was a sight for the gods to dwell upon,

and would at once attract the notice of every beholder.

Doubtless there were others equally worthy of recording, but my memory does not serve me—nor is it necessary—to particularize each individual member or his team.

During several seasons driving four-in-hand was a fashionable pastime, and its practice had a considerable effect in improving the conduct and manners of the men whose business and livelihood it was. A perfect knowledge of the art involved the necessity of an association with some of its professors—not only for practice sake, but that the amateur might acquire the rudiments, without which he found it impossible to become a proficient. Therefore was the benefit reciprocal; for while the tyro was gaining information from the precepts as well as the example of the experienced practitioner, the latter was also acquiring a

little polish in manners, style, and address, that better fitted him for a position to which he had been advanced by the notice and patronage of the rich.

But now the objects of both have vanished, and the art is likely to die with the purpose that gave it birth.

Steam having surpassed horse-power, driving has ceased to be a profession ; and with nothing to engage the attention of the amateur, or to invite his imitation, both tutor and pupil, original and copy, have, as our senators would say, *pari passu*, disappeared.

Some weak attempt may be—indeed has been made—to prolong or revive the love for this national pastime and display ; but even should the present amateurs succeed in forming a new society or club, we may look in vain for such glorious specimens of the four-in-hand as we have seen, or for that skill in driving four horses that a perfect knowledge of the rudiments alone can

give ; and where are those rudiments to be taught or learnt but in a school that is now no more? As well may we attempt to revive the study of grammar or rhetoric in Athens or Rhodes without an Apollodorus, as endeavour to resuscitate the art of driving in this Island without a Jack Moody.* Consequently, all knowledge of it will pass away, or it will be recognised only in the records of poets or historians, like the chariot of Achilles or the dress of Nero.

It would be almost a folly here to enter into a dissertation upon an art that is nearly obsolete, and bids fair to become as much lost to future generations as is that of training lions to cars, or any other such practices of the ancients. But if it should be asked what is meant by rudiments ; the reply is—a proper understanding of the nature of the mouth and temper of the animal—as well as a correct knowledge of

* The name of two celebrated practitioners on the Windsor road, Father and Son.

the means by which he can be best controlled, to become a principal feature in the enjoyment and display of a driver who is supposed to have a perfect management of the four-in-hand—either singly or collectively. This would apply equally to those who were intrusted with the animal for a more useful, though less brilliant purpose.

It is an old saying, and a very true one, as I have myself experienced, that four horses well put together are half drove; therefore, no man can be a proficient in the art without paying the nicest attention to the biting, bridling, harnessing, putting to and coupling his team; and without such attention, as well as to the proper length of each trace, the poll chains, and a proper adjustment of the curb, and seeing that the collar, pads, and harness, fit in every part—that every buckle and strap is in its right place—no man can drive in crowded streets with precision or safety. By this attention too—the horse goes with more

ease to himself, and is less likely to gall and chafe, which will frequently make the best tempered animal fretful and fractious in harness.

I do not pretend ever to have been a perfect master of this useful, as well as fashionable and exhilarating art. I knew my own inferiority, at the same time I could pronounce upon the merits of others; and though I might not, like that celebrated writer on the road, "Nimrod," tell a coachman by the manner he drew his right hand glove on—the way in which he took hold of the reins and mounted his box would give me some little idea whether he was an adept in the art or not. The consequence and the necessity of paying a strict attention to and acquiring a perfect knowledge of these early rudiments of an art then so much in vogue, I once experienced in a remarkable manner.

Beginning at the Golden Cross, passing through the city, and making my exit

by Shoreditch Church from this great metropolis—(which sacred edifice I never passed without casting my eyes up at its steeple in admiration, for it is one of Sir Christopher Wren's most beautiful specimens)—I had plenty of what was called stone work. One morning a fresh horse was put to my coach—one that had only been purchased the day before—and, what was contrary to all adopted custom, harnessed as near leader. It was of no use to expostulate, so, after looking round, I got up. Starting and proceeding along the Strand and Fleet Street, he went pretty straight, except that he carried his body away rather from his partner, as young horses in a strange or new position are apt to do—but a slight communication under his bar soon put that to rights. After stopping at the corner of Wood Street, we proceeded along Cheapside by the Bank to the commencement of Threadneedle Street, when he made a bolt to go down Broad Street. I had my hand upon his rein in-

stantly, and prevented him taking the wrong road. But there being a post, in the shape of a gun with the muzzle downwards, as there is now at the corner, I could not catch him up, in time to prevent his going on the pavement inside of it. In the same instant, seeing that the leaders' bars would be caught by the post, having my wheel-horses tight in hand I drew their reins back; this caused them to throw their heads up, and that acting upon the pole-chains, jerked the bars over the top of the post: at the same moment, as it were, hitting the near wheel-horse, he brought the splinter-bar clear, and neither horse, harness, or any part of the coach or carriage touched that post. This occupied only a few seconds, for the wheels never ceased turning, and the escape from any accident must be attributed to the care and nicety with which the horses were harnessed and put to, and proves the necessity of a coachman's having a perfect knowledge of the bearings

of every part of the harness, so as to have a full command of his wheel-horses; for here there were three chances—that is, of the bars coming in contact with the post, the pole breaking in the futchells, or the splinter-bar, or the near fore-wheel striking the post; either of which might have been attended with bad consequences, and was avoided by the pole-chains being of a proper length, and the wheel-horses being properly curbed up.

Many accidents, some of them of a most serious nature, have occurred from a neglect or want of knowledge of these indispensable rules; and no man, either gentle or simple, can be called a perfect master of the art, without possessing a matured judgment and experience on these points—he may have admirable skill in using the whip—and in this many young amateurs are too vain of their ability, frequently punishing a horse unmercifully, with no other object than that of showing

their dexterity and skill—but the lack of the former qualification will account for the very small number of gentlemen who have ever attained anything like perfection. In this I do not include those who became daily practitioners on the Brighton road, a road that latterly seemed purposely reserved, or particularly adapted, for the exhibition of their skill—such as Mr. Stevenson, Mr. C. Jones, Sir St. Vincent Cotton, John Willan, Esq., and others.

Indeed, the only amateur I ever knew who combined theory with practice—and I say it without fear of being accused of adulation—a correct judgment, with an easy, at the same time skilful execution in this enviable accomplishment, and who can really be called a perfect master of the art, is the gentleman to whom I have dedicated these volumes.

THE following petition was written when the railroad mania was at its zenith, and the country in a fevered and discontented state. It was presented by the late lamented Lord Joscelyn, in the session of 1846, when member for King's Lynn, and, like many others of greater or less importance, was ordered to lie on the table:—

“To the Honourable the Commons of
Great Britain and Ireland, in
Parliament assembled,—

“The humble Petition of THOMAS CROSS,
of King's Lynn, in the County
of Norfolk, late stage-coach pro-
prietor, sheweth,—

“That your petitioner was originally brought up in a noble profession, but from a visitation of Providence, and other circumstances over which he had no control, was compelled to seek subsistence as a stage-coachman.

“That your petitioner has now followed that employment for eight-and-twenty years, and during this time has been enabled to provide for a wife and large family in a respectable manner.

“That your petitioner has seen, with considerable dismay, the invention and rapid increase of railroads during the last few years, accomplishing the ruin of hundreds in the same employment as your petitioner; and now, by the numerous Bills before your Honourable House, threatening the very livelihood of your petitioner and his numerous family.

“That your petitioner, not actuated by selfish motives alone, but viewing with deep sympathy the distress, the discontent, the poverty, and the ruin, that has lately, and does now partially, pervade the land, would humbly point out to your Honourable House how much the invention and use of railroads has had to do with their increase.

“That your petitioner, passing over the

large amount invested in turnpike trusts, now become bankrupt in consequence of substituting railroad for stage-coach travelling, which has been more than once mooted in your Honourable House, would proceed at once to shew the direct injury, the devastating ruin, that has fallen, not only on those immediately connected with stage-coach business (with the exception of a few, and those of an extraordinary character), but through them with every class of tradesmen inhabiting towns situate in any of our great thoroughfares, whether they be North, South, East, or West.

“And your petitioner would further proceed to shew that this injury has its ramifications from one end of the Island to the other, threatening the depreciation of property to a ruinous extent; as a proof of which, your petitioner need only point to every town in the kingdom which a railroad has approached, except two or three of our largest cities and towns; and even to

them the benefit would become questionable, should the state of every class of their overcrowded populations be strictly looked into.

“That your petitioner is not unwilling to admit the convenience, the luxury—nay, even the safety and importance, as regards the speed of the new mode of travelling—as also to acknowledge the truth of the French philosopher’s axiom, that the quick communication of persons and thoughts is the very perfection of civilization; but your petitioner would humbly submit that luxury is not happiness, any more than civilization is prosperity in a nation or in a family.

“That your petitioner views with considerable alarm, for the welfare and happiness of his Country the immense amount of capital already invested in railroads—amounting, with the costs of those now introduced, or intended to be introduced, to your Honourable House, to more than three

hundred millions sterling; and that your petitioner's alarm arises from this vast accumulation of capital, its tendency having been at all times and in all nations to make the rich man richer and the poor man poorer—thereby oppressing the working-classes, and grinding our already debased peasantry to the very extreme of misery, inducing the increase of atrocious crime to a most fearful extent.

“That your petitioner would also shew that these monster establishments render anything like competition impossible, and create a monopoly which, under any circumstances and in any form, is, has been, and ever will be, inimical to the best interests of the community.

“That your petitioner witnesses the investment of such capital, in a financial point of view, by individuals in certain trunk lines, as being beneficial, as well to the country as to the shareholders, inasmuch as they (the latter) get good interest

for their money, and are thereby enabled, in some measure, to counteract the evil they have produced; while others, many of them, some that have passed, and others now before your Honourable House, originating in false premises, and projected by artful and designing men, are calculated to give rise to a spirit of gambling, successful for a while, but which must ultimately involve, if they have not already done so, the ruin of thousands, who have, under some specious pretexts, consented to become their dupes; such systematic adventurous schemes being derogatory to the national character, subversive of that safe and healthy state which the monetary transactions of a great commercial country should ever enjoy, incompatible with the industrious habits, as well as prejudicial to the social, moral, and religious obligations, of the people.

“That your petitioner has long and deeply thought of and deplored the late

dilapidated state of our finances, the state of the nation—her debt, her revenue, her expenditure, her resources—as well as our present unwholesome system of taxation; and your petitioner, with his faculties unimpaired, and the same zeal to serve his country as he had when he first put his foot on board of a man-of-war, is prepared to prove before any Committee your Honourable House shall appoint, upon certain returns being produced, that such a revenue can be raised from the present mode of travelling as shall surpass all others in its efficiency, its safety, its equality, its justice, and its policy; and that, too, without any interference with vested rights.

“And here your petitioner cannot but remind your Honourable House, that in cases where great changes have been wrought, care has always been taken of vested rights — such as with the Municipal Reform Bill, which provides com-

pensation for the clerks of different corporate towns.

“ Therefore, your petitioner lastly prays, that in passing any Bills having reference to railroads, in some or one of them such provision shall be made as shall prevent your petitioner and his family from coming to the extreme of misery.

“ And your petitioner, as in duty bound, shall ever pray.

“ Signed, at Cambridge, 15th April, 1845.

“ THO. CROSS.”

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